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‘I am someone, I am not invisible': Exploring choirs and community singing groups for people who have experienced homelessness

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Declaration

This thesis was submitted to the University of Edinburgh in August 2019.

I am the sole author and all material that has not been identified is my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Some of the findings from this research have been published in the journal *Transform: New Voices in Community Music,* in an article entitled, 'I am someone, I am not invisible': Exploring the experience of participating in choirs for singers affected by homelessness in Rio de Janeiro (2018).

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This thesis is dedicated to Carmel and Jim, my mum and dad
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Abstract

There has been a significant growth in the number of new choirs and community singing opportunities in the last fifteen years (Reagon et al., 2016), to support different social groups and specific health populations. Personal testimonies about the positive impact of participating abound, with people actively seeking opportunities to participate in choirs for social as well as musical reasons. This interest has been matched by a growth of research, exploring the relationship between group singing and wellbeing. Singing groups have been set up for people who have experienced homelessness, however, with limited research to date, there is a need for further exploration around how this population experience being in a group. This research will contribute to our understanding of wellbeing and community singing.

This is a qualitative phenomenological study of singing groups set up in the UK and Rio de Janeiro for people who have experienced homelessness. It seeks to understand how singers experience participation and explores the accounts of people who run and support the groups and those who set them up. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with singers and staff, while rehearsals and performances were observed. Thematic analysis revealed that the singing groups are physical, symbolic and emotional places marked out as separate from the wider experience of homelessness. Boundaries are held by explicit and implicit rules and through the support and care received by the group leader and other staff, the session becomes a sanctuary-like place. Within this safe space new social interactions are possible, and relationships are formed with other singers, staff and audiences. While there are benefits from these exchanges, the relationship within the groups can be challenging. Singers reported further positive impacts relating to wellbeing: emotional, mental and cognitive benefits and a deeper connection to the sense of self. Public performances can be a

critical part of being a group member, bringing experiences of visibility and validation and challenging society's perception of homelessness.

This research highlights the value of singing groups for people who are homeless, improving their life satisfaction, by engaging in an activity that is worthwhile and has meaning. Participating enables the construction of a new musical persona which challenges both the stigma associated with a homeless identity and public perceptions of the condition. Homelessness is a national emergency (Shelter, 2019c) and one of the biggest social issues in the UK. While these singing groups cannot 'fix' homelessness or the housing crisis, they offer more than a pleasant distraction; challenging some of the experiences associated with the condition and contributing to improving the quality of life of singers.

Chapter 1 Introduction

In July 2012 a unique event happened at the Royal Opera House in London. Over three hundred people who had experienced homelessness gathered to publicly celebrate and showcase their creative and artistic skills. This was unusual enough, but it was also an occasion to help launch the Olympics, a sporting spectacle historically linked with the removal and cleansing of people who are homeless from the streets (Kennelly and Watt, 2011; Schmidt and Robaina, 2017). Matt Peacock, the founder of Streetwise Opera was instrumental in devising and staging the performance and had a vision for 'the London Olympics to be inclusive for people who experience homelessness, for the first time' and to challenge the perspective of homelessness, 'from people with need, to people with achievements.' This was the first large-scale event that brought together homeless musicians and performers and the only known time that the Olympics had recognised and celebrated people who are homeless.

I was the choir leader of one of the choirs who were invited to perform. They were a group from the East End of Glasgow called the Lodging House Mission choir. They had been running since December 2010 and were based in a day centre for people who were homeless. The group were in the middle of a three-year creative partnership with Scottish Opera and a new opera called *Who Killed John King?* had been written by the choir and a Scottish Opera team. The performances had piqued the interest of the national Scottish press and the group were interviewed on the radio and appeared in local newspapers and on television. The piece had been performed in two venues in Glasgow earlier in the year, alongside professional opera singers and musicians and it was an excerpt of this opera that the choir performed at Covent Garden.

1.1 Background

The purpose of this research is to explore choirs and singing groups set up for people who have experienced homelessness. The study was designed to investigate groups in the UK, with a second smaller part of the study conducted in Rio de Janeiro, interviewing singers and associated staff. This chapter brings some context and background in which to situate the research, looking at the motivation and rationale for the study. It begins with a personal account of my position as the founder and leader of a homeless choir, before outlining the rise of these community singing groups in the UK. The chapter then explores how the opportunity to conduct research in Brazil emerged and the rise of homeless choirs in Rio de Janeiro. The use of terminology around homelessness is a political issue and this is considered with an outline of the terms used throughout this thesis. The chapter closes with a short summary of each of the subsequent chapters, providing an overview of the dissertation.

In 2010, as project leader of a community music charity called Givin' it Laldie, I set up the Lodging House Mission choir. What had started as an informal singing of Christmas songs around the piano in the main hall, had, a year and a half later, resulted in a committed and enthusiastic choir, who went on to become a cast of over twenty members, all of whom engaged in writing and performing an opera with Scottish Opera. Through this partnership, members developed their singing abilities, acquired acting skills and embraced opera, going on to devise a second opera called *The Blue Tango Club*. The partnership with Scottish Opera and the performance in London demanded a deeper commitment from the members, in terms of both time and energy as well as relationships. It served as a catalyst for choir members; it consolidated the choir as a group; it brought them respect and kudos and it allowed choir members to experience a sense of connection to a wider international community. It also reinforced their identity as musicians and on returning from London some singers went on to join another community choir

that I led in the city. Some choir members wanted to build on their acting skills and joined a community theatre group.

This time proved to be a period of deepening curiosity about the choir for me: questions arose about what it means to be a member and the role the group plays in the life of the singer. The additional time spent together with singers beyond the regular two hours of the weekly rehearsal deepened our relationships. Through the Scottish Opera team leading the rehearsals and introducing new methods of working, I was given an opportunity to see the group from an outsider perceptive. I observed how they responded artistically to exploring opera and acting, and I became attuned to their fears and vulnerabilities when pushed beyond their comfort level. It was also evident that the singers experienced a surge in confidence and pride through overcoming challenges together. I noticed that some choir members often made very wide-reaching claims about the impact of the group on their lives; one singer said she did not think she would still be alive if she had not joined the choir and another said she credited the group with securing a job and a flat. These bold claims led to a growing personal interest around how singers understood their group and how participating brought these benefits. I was also curious about the commitment members made to the group: some singers remained long term, while for others their involvement was short term or sporadic.

The intention of this research is to add to the small body of studies conducted with singing groups for people who have experienced homelessness in Canada, Portugal and the USA (Bailey and Davidson, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2005; Boal-Palheiros, 2017; Cronley et al., 2018; Nordberg et al., 2018). It contributes to our understanding by exploring groups in the UK and Brazil. Previous studies have been rooted in music psychology and this research is no exception, but it will also bring a sociological perspective. This responds to DeNora's (2015) call for research on music and wellbeing to reject the argument that music is a tool or a

stimulus that acts upon people and to view group music-making as a cultural and social practice. She challenges researchers to look beyond the physicality of the musician and consider their values; social interactions; their history; their 'social and ecological paradigm' (p.6). She argues that when exploring wellbeing and quality of life, it is necessary to embed a person within a cultural and social context.

This research sits within the field of community music and reflects the newly emerged theoretical framework (Higgins, 2012; Higgins and Willingham, 2017). However, it challenges the democratic, non-hierarchical principle and argues that singing groups set up for people who are homeless benefit from a top-down approach with clear rules. These explicit and implicit codes help maintain the boundaries and create a safe sanctuary-like space. The findings make a critical contribution to this small research field by proposing to answer the how question: how do these groups bring positive wellbeing outcomes? This study argues that the sanctuary-like space, or music asylum (DeNora, 2015) removes singers from the experience of homelessness and into a safe and maintained place. It is here that they can experience emotional, social and mental wellbeing benefits and perform identity work, challenging their stigmatising homeless persona.

Singing groups set up for people who have experienced homelessness sit within two paradigms. They are not magic bullets that can somehow 'fix' the housing crisis or negate the damaging impact of poverty, but neither are they 'bread and circus', offering superficial appeasement. This study highlights the value of participating in these groups, which bring an opportunity to engage in an activity that is worthwhile and has meaning. They can lead to social and wellbeing benefits that improve the quality of life of the singer and these positive outcomes that can be transferred beyond the session. They also challenge societies pre-conceptions around people who are homeless, confronting the stigma associated with the social condition.

1.2 Choirs and Community singing groups

There is a rich tradition of communities coming together to sing in the UK. Where once choirs were associated with churches or singing classical pre-composed repertoire (Bithell, 2014), there has been a growth in new inclusive community singing groups in the last twenty years (Reagon et al., 2016). The principles of community, participation, cultural democracy, friendship, hospitality and diversity (Bithell, 2014) have underpinned these new groups (Higgins, 2012). One motivation for people to join choirs is the social and therapeutic benefits that come from participation and the impact on health and wellbeing. This is evident in the growing body of groups set up for specific populations. Two examples are the network of choirs to support people affected by cancer, which have been set up across England and Wales (Fancourt et al., 2016) and the Alzheimer's Society's singing groups called Sing for the Brain (Osman et al., 2016). There is also evidence of professionals referring people to choirs to help address specific health concerns (Hards, 2017). The link, then, between singing and improved wellbeing and social impact is becoming more widely acknowledged. This growing interest in singing and wellbeing is reflected in the press, from the broad claim that an hour of singing prevents cancerous tumours (Spencer, 2016), to the idea that singing makes you smarter, healthier, happier and more creative (De Jong, 2014). This media interest has mirrored the growth of popular television shows that have also helped to promote the benefits of group singing. The BBC's most popular choir leader, Gareth Malone, has consistently been on television promoting the benefits of singing since 2007 and televised choral competitions such as The Naked Choir in 2015 have helped promote the group singing experience.

1.3 Homelessness

Homelessness is a complex and multi-faceted condition, described as a national crisis in the UK (Fitzpatrick et al., 2018) and a national emergency (*Shelter*,

2019a). The number of people who have experienced homelessness has dramatically increased since 2010 after the global financial crisis of 2007-2008. The situation has escalated as a result of the austerity policies introduced by the Conservative government and compounded by the current housing crisis in the UK, with councils in Scotland and England lacking the social housing to meet the growing need (Fitzpatrick et al., 2019a, 2019b).

Despite the UK being the fifth largest economy in the world, one quarter of the population live in poverty and one and half million people experienced destitution in 2017 (Alston, 2019). An independent review of homelessness was conducted by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in 2019 (Fitzpatrick et al., 2019b, 2019a) for both England and Scotland and offers an overview of the current situation in both countries. The trend in homelessness can partly be understood through the numbers of people and households who present to the council as homeless and through assessing the numbers street sleeping each year. These figures only give some indication though of the situation. The 'hidden' homeless do not appear on any national statistics and are not visible on the streets, staying with friends or family, sofa-surfing, sleeping in squats, sheds, tents, renting a room in a private hostel or sleeping on night transport (Reeve and Batty, 2011). Many of these people are described as the 'core homeless' and are experiencing the most acute form of the condition (Bramley, 2017).

The causes of homelessness are complex and there is no single pathway (Fitzpatrick et al., 2019a), with people becoming homeless due to a combination of factors (Snow and Anderson, 1993). There are large macro structural trends, such as the housing and labour market, unemployment, housing policies and the political climate (Somerville, 2013), as well as social policies (Anderson, 2007) and reduced welfare support (*Homelessness Causes of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping*, 2019). Another driver is individual circumstances, or 'personal vulnerabilities' (Bramley and Fitzpatrick, 2018). These might include life events

that are traumatic, mental or physical health issues, addictions, violence, relationship problems and lack of financial 'resilience' or family background (Anderson, 2007; Homelessness Causes of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping, 2019). A current explanation is that homelessness is caused by a combination of both (Fitzpatrick, 2005; Homelessness Causes of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping, 2019) and that structural forces create the right conditions for homeless to occur and personal issues lead people who are more vulnerable to be susceptible to social and economic trends.

The rise in homelessness in England has been dramatic in the last decade, with a 60% rise in families or individuals placed in temporary accommodation by the local authorities since 2012. This fell slightly in 2017/2018, due in part to the preventative measure of the Homeless Reduction Act of 2017 (Fitzpatrick et al., 2019a; Garvie, 2018b). This was a new policy that increased the rights of people who are homeless in England and widened responsibility of local authorities to both prevent homelessness and secure accommodation for those who are eligible. In Scotland the number has been falling between 2008 to 2017, due to the introduction of the Housing Options policy. This was an information and advice service offered by Scottish councils, focusing on an individual's circumstances to help prevent homelessness. These preventative measures have now been maximised and the number of people and families being accepted as homeless by local authorities, has begun to rise (Fitzpatrick, 2019). Rough sleeping statistics published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (GOV.UK, 2019) indicate that the number of street sleepers in autumn 2018 in England on one night was 4,677. This figure was up 165% from 2010. The number of people street sleeping was down 2% from the previous year overall, although the cities of London, Manchester and Birmingham have continued to see an increase (Fitzpatrick et al., 2019a). Street sleeping figures for Scotland have plateaued with approximately 700 people rough sleeping on any one night across

the country and a total of 5,300 people in total street sleeping throughout 2017 (Fitzpatrick et al., 2019b).

These figures help explain the increased visibility of people who are homeless in UK towns and cities. Bramley (2017) argues that the austerity policies introduced will see homelessness continue to rise across the UK, despite the preventative measures introduced. In fact, core homelessness which has increased by 33% between 2011 and 2016 is set to rise to 200,000 by 2026 (Bramley, 2017). One intervention that has been piloted internationally and deemed successful across homeless services is the Housing First model which was developed in the United States (Johnsen, 2013; Homeless Link, 2015). This approach addresses homelessness by placing people with multiple and complex needs in their own independent home as a priority and then providing wrap-around support to meet the need of the individual. Successful pilots have been implemented in England and Scotland (Johnsen, 2013) and research found that the success of this model depends on tackling social isolation. People who are being supported should be encouraged to engage in 'normal' activities, which will act as a 'diversion' and increase their confidence in accessing community facilities.

The experience of homelessness leads to a damning impact on health and wellbeing. The charity Crisis found that 78% of people who are homeless reported having a physical health condition (compared to 37% of the general population), and 44%, had a mental health diagnosis (compared to 23% of the general population). Poor physical and mental health is both a cause and consequence of homelessness (Homeless Link, 2014). In England 600 people died while homeless in 2017 (Alston, 2017) an average of 11 people per week (Homeless Link, 2014), with a third dying from treatable medical conditions. People who are homeless are nine times more likely to take their own life and seven time more likely to be the victim of violence (Homeless link, 2014). Loneliness and isolation are a critical reflection of homelessness and a study by Crisis found 66% of people

who are homeless reported that they felt lonely (Sanders and Brown, 2015). The use of alcohol and drugs was found to mitigate the isolation experienced (Butchinsky, 2007).

Gathering a coherent understanding of homelessness in Brazil is a complex issue, due to the lack of publicly available material. The developing country with a population of 210 million is one of the world's most unequal and a third of the population live in extreme poverty (Lovisi et al., 2007). Street homelessness in Rio has risen dramatically over the last three years and the Homeless Word Cup (2019) estimate this has increased by 150%. There were an estimated 10,000 people sleeping on the streets of Rio in 2013 (Heritage and Peacock, 2014).

Homelessness has a devastating impact on health and wellbeing. The impact on self-esteem is captured in a report by Crisis, which found that 44% of people who are homeless feel they are undeserving of help and they experienced shame and stigmatised at being homeless (Sanders and Brown, 2015). Chapter three will explore relevant theory and research around homelessness, arguing it is more than just about adequate housing and consider the wider impact on individuals.

1.4 Singing and Homelessness

Research conducted on the Housing First pilots, found that the pathway out of homelessness is dependent on addressing social isolation and being involved in community activities (Johnsen, 2013). Community singing groups set up for people who have experienced homelessness offer an opportunity to meet this need. There are two organisations in England that have been leaders in promoting singing opportunities for people who are homeless: Streetwise Opera and Choir with No Name.

Streetwise Opera has been running for seventeen years and was set up by Matt Peacock MBE. When he founded the organisation, he was a key worker at The

Passage, a homeless day centre in London, and a journalist for Opera Now magazine. In an interview on Radio 4, the then Conservative Minister for Housing and Planning, Sir George Young, said that 'the homeless are what you step over when you come out of the opera' (Eaton, 2012). This comment prompted a debate at The Passage with some centre-users feeling disrespected, while other perceived it as a challenge. Matt was asked to draw on his connections to give people at the centre an opportunity to be involved in opera. The first event was held at the Royal Opera House and involved a performance by professionals with people who had experienced homeless working backstage. The show was positively received and the people from The Passage wanted further opportunities to be involved in opera. This was the motivation to set up the charity Streetwise Opera.

Streetwise Opera have two different kinds of workshops that they run in five cities in England. They have a drop-in workshop which is exclusively for people who are homeless which run within homeless day centres, or recovery or refugee centres. In the same cities they also have an explore workshop, that runs in community arts venues. This model offers a progression pathway for their members who can move from a safe group within the homeless sector into a similar group run in the community. Performances are a key part of the organisation's methodology, with a high-profile regional production being staged every few years. They offer opportunities for members to attend opera and theatre productions and engage in work placements and volunteering opportunities. Streetwise Opera has developed a very robust system of evaluation and closely monitor changes in the wellbeing of their members and the impact on social inclusion.

Matt Peacock agreed for Streetwise Opera to be involved in this research and made introductions to his staff team. I was given access to workshops and performances and permission to invite Streetwise Opera members to be

interviewed. Although the focus of their work is opera and this involves acting and movement, the singing is such a fundamental part of their workshops and performances, that it is considered a group singing activity for the purposes of this research.

The other key UK organisation that has contributed to this research and offers group singing activities for people who are homeless is Choir With No Name. Marie Benton, the founder, was working as the Campaigns and Communication Manager at the homeless charity St. Mungo in 2008 when she organised the first choir rehearsal in the community. Her motivation for setting up the charity grew out of her experiences of singing in a choir when she first moved to London. She says that through her choir, 'I met a lot of really good friends' and 'found a community where I felt I belonged' and she wanted to create the same opportunity for people who were homeless. Marie had worked as a professional musician and had previously run Gospel choirs. Initially a friend volunteered to play the piano, while others offered to cook a meal each week and a rehearsal space was offered for free in King's Cross. At the first rehearsal they welcomed four singers.

Choir With No Name has been operational for eleven years running choirs across England for homeless and marginalised people at four city locations. They have a weekly rehearsal followed by a meal that staff and singers share. A meal was eaten at the first rehearsal and has remained a unique part of the CWNN model. Marie said, 'we did it almost by accident, but it's so important to the members now'. Their mission is to enable their singers to 'make friends, build their confidence and skills and find their place in society'. Like Streetwise Opera, a key focus of their work is public performances and they have had some high-profile events such as supporting Coldplay on tour in 2010. Marie agreed to be interviewed for this research and allowed me to attended choir rehearsals and performances, to meet staff and singers and invite them to be interviewed.

These two highly visible organisations have received extensive press interest, reached many audience members and attracted followers through public performances, social media, newspaper articles and television appearances. This has helped to promote the idea of choirs and singing groups for people who are homeless beyond the homeless sector.

Academic research conducted with singing groups set up for people who have experienced homelessness indicates that participation has a positive impact on the social, emotional and cognitive wellbeing of singers (Bailey and Davidson, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2005; Boal-Palheiros, 2017; Nordberg et al., 2018). These findings mirror the aims of both these organisations: Streetwise Opera seeks to improve social inclusion and wellbeing and Choir With No Name aims to give opportunities for people to make friends, improve confidence and help singers find their place in society. These outcomes reflect the wellbeing model of Ryff and Keyes (1995), who proposed that fulfilment in life is found through self-acceptance, forming positive relationships, having purpose and a sense of agency and a life with meaning. The exposure and visibility afforded through the performances, press and social media of both organisations is key to aiding wellbeing through interacting and forming relationships with people in society. They also serve to help people reconcile their homeless identity and so achieve self-acceptance.

In addition to Streetwise Opera and Choir With No Name there are other homeless singing groups that run across the UK. Often these are run as a service within a homeless support organisation, for example the charity Crisis runs a timetable of arts activities at their Skylight centres and these often include choirs. Other groups are run within homeless services run by Christian organisations: an example is the Lodging House Mission choir, based within a homeless day centre and now funded and run by the Church of Scotland. There is growing interest in

developing the sector in the UK as the work becomes more widely recognised (Coyne, 2018; With One Voice, 2019a).

1.5 International Work

The success of the event at the Royal Opera House, led to questions from the organisers, Streetwise Opera, about its legacy and what could follow. A piece of research was then conducted looking at the feasibility of putting on a similar project for the Rio Olympics (Heritage and Peacock, 2014). The final report proposed that the sector in Rio would benefit from focusing on capacity-building, strengthening local networks and creating opportunities for local and international knowledge exchange. Three cultural exchanges were planned to share knowledge and build an international community around arts and homelessness to support the work in Rio. The final exchange included an international delegation from Japan, Australia, England, Scotland, USA and Portugal coming together to share knowledge and best practice. I was a delegate and part of this cultural exchange. It coincided with an arts and homeless 'occupation' of the city which was run simultaneously with other cultural events to mark the start of the Olympics. The 'occupation' involved people who were homeless and involved in music, theatre or art, appearing across the city in brief pop-up performances. Part of the capacity-building in Rio, leading up to the Olympics was to grow a larger network of choirs for people with experience of homelessness and support a choir leader called Rico Vasconcellos to form these groups. These new choirs were involved in the arts and homeless occupation and performed across the city in high profile public venues. They had been running for three months.

Being a delegate for the final cultural exchange in Rio provided a valuable opportunity to be at the centre of a unique happening around arts and homelessness. It also allowed me to be immersed in the world of choirs for singers who are homeless in a different cultural setting. Matt Peacock approved

my research, introducing me to choir leaders, singers and translators. Interviews were conducted with choir members and leaders and I attended many rehearsals and performances.

During the exchange, the new international arts and homeless movement called With One Voice was officially launched. Their mission statement says:

> Our vision is of a world in which the arts is used to support and give a voice to homeless people everywhere in the world. With One Voice is an international movement that aims to strengthen the arts and homelessness sector through exchanges in practice and policy.
>
> (With One Voice, 2019a)

This new organisation, founded by Streetwise Opera and Matt Peacock, was set up in response to the success of first Olympic event at the Royal Opera House in 2012 and the research conducted in Rio (Heritage and Peacock, 2014). It signals an international commitment to build the arts and homeless sector: by strengthening existing work; inspiring new activity; increasing awareness of arts activities for people who are homeless and influence policy (Shaw, 2017). To begin to understand the work world-wide, they have commissioned three reviews looking at the arts and homelessness sector in different countries. Three have been published to date, one in the USA/Canada (Knowles, 2017), another in Japan (Peacock and Raymont, 2018) and one that I have conducted with a team of co-researchers with experience of homelessness and the arts in Scotland (Coyne, 2018). The launch of the movement and the interest to understand the field in different locations indicates a growing interest in arts and homelessness as a sector.

Beyond the choirs set up for people who are homeless in Rio, there is also evidence of other international groups. Some of the work has been highlighted through research conducted with groups in the USA, Canada, Portugal and Brazil

(Bailey and Davidson, 2005; Boal-Palheiros, 2017; Cronley et al., 2018; Nordberg et al., 2018). With One Voice (2019c), has also created an evidence map which currently identifies sixty four music activities happening for people with experience of homelessness internationally and many of these are choirs or include group singing.

1.6 Terminology

The terminology used to describe homelessness and people who are homeless is hugely significant and contentious. It is inextricably linked to how homelessness is understood, and the solutions offered to address the condition. Sociologist Stebbing (2017), argues that the choice of terminology is a political act which has an impact both on policy and allocated resources. Labelling a person in terms of them not having a home or focusing on their dysfunctions can add to the stigma of the experience (Thomas et al., 2012) and bring feelings of social exclusion (Street Support Network, 2018). Research around homelessness must then explore and examine definitions and attempt to avoid adding to the discrimination. Discussions around how a person is defined in relation to being homeless is a concern within the homeless sector, both for people who are homeless and those working in this area (Street Support Network, 2018). Defining a person by their housing status, so labelling someone 'homeless' is a term that has been largely replaced by the phrase, a 'person with lived experience of homelessness'. This has been favoured as it focuses on the person, separating them from their situation, avoiding defining someone based on their housing status. The term 'experience' also suggests an element of temporality, that homelessness does not define a person's life but may just refer to a defined period. Academics researching this area, albeit from the discipline of housing, policy, sociology, public health or music psychology, generally describe participants as 'homeless people', although there are exceptions (McNaughton, 2008; Thomas et al., 2012a; McCarthy, 2013).

Service users at a homeless day centre in the north of England explored terminology around how they wished to be described ("Street Support Network" 2018). The advisory group argued that they did not want to be called someone with 'lived experience' or a client or a service user, all of which they reported made them feel uncomfortable. However, they did propose that the term 'people' should prefix any description, such as 'people who are currently homeless' or 'people who are sleeping rough'. They also suggested that the label could refer to someone's skills and experience, such as 'people with experience of volunteering'. Where someone was accompanying a member of staff to an event, the group felt the person should be asked how they wanted to introduce themselves, challenging the power dynamic between professionals in the housing sector and people who have been homeless. This insight helps to inform the appropriate terminology used in this thesis. When indicating that I am referring to someone who is, or has been homeless, the term 'people' or a similar word will always be used as a prefix, for example, people or singers who have been homeless. I have avoided the term 'lived experience' and favour the use of 'experience of homelessness'.

Streetwise Opera use the term 'performers' when describing the people in their groups, while Choir With No Name describe participants as 'choir members'. Singers and group leaders from the other UK groups in this research also used the term 'choir members'. For the purposes of this thesis, I use the generic terms: group members, participants or singers. For the Rio data, the same terms will be used but also 'choir members', as all groups involved in the study identified as a choir. The term 'group leader' is used throughout the UK data, and when discussing Rio, I use 'choir leader'. Finally, when referring to the UK weekly groups, I have avoided using the term 'rehearsal' or 'workshop, terms used by the two large organisations involved in this research and opted for the more general term 'session'. For the Rio choirs though, the term rehearsal is appropriate.

The decision around terminology choice seeks to bring consistency throughout the thesis when describing musicians and the music-making session. It also indicates a specific conceptualisation of homelessness, so the person experiencing the condition is central to the description rather than their housing status. These terms seek to maintain the dignity of the people in the study who are homeless and reduce the risk of further stigmatisation. Throughout this thesis, Streetwise Opera will be abbreviated to SO and Choir With No Name to CWNN.

1.7 Structure of the Thesis

In Chapter 2, I provide a review of the theoretical and empirical literature that pertains to the research questions around music and singing in relation to this study. It begins by considering the properties of music and singing that make it a suitable activity to support wellbeing. The chapter proposes three wellbeing and quality of life models that help explain why singing with others may lead to positive outcomes. Choirs and groups set up to investigate different wellbeing issues are explored, before the small field of research conducted with groups set up specifically for people who are homeless is reviewed. Other music and homeless groups are considered in order to give a broader perspective. Finally, the chapter considers the theory around community music which underpins this study.

In Chapter 3, I provide a review of key literature beginning by looking at the concept of homelessness in relation to this study. I then explore how homelessness is defined and understood across different disciplines. I identify the concepts of relationships, health, space and identity, as key experiences of homelessness that relate to this study. This chapter concludes with the research questions.

In Chapter 4, I introduce the qualitative phenomenological approach I have taken and explain my epistemological and ontological position. Researcher reflexivity

is considered in detail drawing extensively on examples from the study. I then outline ethical issues and emerging concerns before outlining the design of the research and elaborating on the decision to use thematic analysis.

The four substantive chapters explore in depth four themes that have emerged from the UK data. Chapter 5 explores how the groups are temporal and spatial places marked out as separate from the wider experience of homelessness. Boundaries are held by explicit and implicit rules that enable the groups to function. The space can become a welcoming and hospitable sanctuary. Chapter 6 is concerned with the personal connections that form within the group. The position that singers hold in relation to other singers is explored and relationships with other singers and the staff. The benefits and challenges are also considered. Chapter 7 builds on this theme of relationships and looks at how participating has an impact on wellbeing and quality of life. It proposes that participating in a singing group helps singers develop a greater sense of self, explore identity and foster positive emotional states. Chapter 8 focuses on performances and how they are a special event for many singers, increasing their exposure and validating their musical identity. Performances bring challenges for the organisers, staff and singers, but can lead to a special opportunity for people who are homeless to present themselves and perform their new identity whilst engaging with audiences and society.

Chapter 9 explores the findings that emerged from the study in Rio. It begins by looking at the impact on wellbeing: the cognitive benefits, the positive emotional outcomes and a deeper connection to a sense of self. The chapter then looks at the relational aspects of the group and how participating brings a sense of belonging. It then explores the impact of performances and the increased visibility, arguing that being part of a group and interacting with an audience leads singers to report they feel accepted and part of society.

Chapter 10 begins with a comparison between the findings from the UK and Rio studies, then draws together the main arguments that have come from the research. The chapter proposes that the singing groups offer a safe space for people who are homeless to explore new ways of being and develop a deeper sense of self. Here singers can explore and form new relationships and improve their wellbeing. Through participating, the singers feel their life is worthwhile and has meaning. The group leader plays a vital role in creating the space in which these shifts can happen. The musical identity and new sense of self supersedes the homeless identity and when this is performed publicly, the singers have a sense of being accepted for who they are and are seen as a complete human being: both a musician and someone who is homeless. The thesis concludes by examining the implications of the study before suggesting further research.

Chapter 2 What is it about Music?

This chapter provides a contextual academic background in which to situate this study, looking at relevant theory and research relating to music. It considers the impact on wellbeing of participating in choirs and considers musical activities for people who are homeless. It is divided into three sections. The first looks at the role of music and singing, exploring how it can be a pertinent activity for impacting wellbeing and quality of life. It outlines three wellbeing and quality of life models, before reviewing some relevant literature with choirs and singing groups that indicate the benefits of group singing. The second section explores the field of music engagement and homelessness, through initially looking at research conducted with homeless choirs and singing groups, before considering other studies with people who are homeless who engage in music activities. The final section of this chapter outlines the theory around community music that underpins this research.

2.1 Why Music?

The belief that music can have a transformative impact on people is not a new idea. Aristotle argued that music can enhance wellbeing by creating an environment that supports our psychological and social needs (Ansdell, 2016). It is fundamentally a social activity (Small, 1998), can arouse deep and significant emotions (Sloboda, 1986; Västfjäll, 2001) and can be manipulated to meet our own needs (Blacking, 2000). MacDonald et al. (2013) compiled a list explaining why music may support good health and wellbeing. They argued that is because it is ubiquitous, emotional, engaging, distracting, physical, ambiguous, social and communicative; it also affects behaviour and identities. Although participating in music may promote health and wellbeing and be life enhancing, measuring and justifying the impact and effectiveness can be a challenge (Cohen, 2009; Clift, 2011).

Three theoretical frameworks help to explain why participating in music may lead to positive life outcomes. The first two are wellbeing models (Ryff and Keyes, 1995; Diener et al., 2003) and have been included as they are recognised psychological measures and while they are not specifically music related, they have been used to explore wellbeing within choir contexts (Gick, 2011). The third is a music therapy model (Ruud, 1997a) and has underpinned research conducted by Bailey and Davidson (2003) with a homeless choir in Canada.

The first is the Model of Hedonic Subjective Wellbeing (Diener et al., 2003), which proposes that wellbeing is predominantly focused on fostering feelings of happiness, life satisfaction and positive mood and can have a beneficial impact on the biological factors of illness (Gick, 2011). This theory provides a useful lens through which to consider the positive impact of group singing and explains the associated positive emotions reported by singers in a homeless choir. It only goes some way to understanding the experience and the following two models offer a broader perspective.

A more encompassing wellbeing framework is Ryff and Keyes' (1995) Eudaimonic Psychological Wellbeing Model. They argue that wellbeing relates to six key areas: self-acceptance, evaluating your life in a positive light; environmental mastery, feeling you have some control of your world and agency; purpose in life, having meaning and direction; positive relations, forming healthy meaningful relationships; personal growth, developing and flourishing as a person and autonomy, determining your own fate or course of action. This model offers a deeper understanding of wellbeing and incorporates more of the social and psychological benefits that are associated with the choir experience. Wellbeing, in this respect, equates to a life that has meaning and purpose.

The final framework is music related and offers a direct explanation of why participating in group music-making may be a positive experience. It is a quality

of life model proposed by music therapist Ruud (1997a), which overlaps with many of the qualities in the previous Eudaimonic Model. Ruud argues that participating in music improves participants' quality of life; through increasing the musician's awareness of feelings, increased agency, a sense of belonging and giving meaning and purpose to life. This model proposes that music engagement can bring social benefits, feelings of control and value to life. While Ryff and Keyes' (1995) model equates wellbeing with self-acceptance, Rudd's model (1997b) goes further and argues that a person must be aware of their feelings and connect to their sense of self in order to achieve full quality of life. Connecting to self is perhaps especially pertinent when considering music, with Juslin and Sloboda (2001) arguing that one of the key reasons people engage in music is to seek an emotional experience.

The following chapter will explore the experience of homelessness and consider the complex relationships, feelings of social exclusion, the prevalence of poor health and associated stigma all associated with the condition. These factors may contribute to poor wellbeing and quality of life, therefore exploring how participating in choirs and singing groups supports wellbeing is highly relevant to the experience of homelessness. These three models offer a framework with which to understand the positive outcomes that musicians report when engaging in music. The terms 'quality of life' and 'wellbeing' are used interchangeably throughout this thesis and describe a fulfilled life experience, based on three models underpinning this research. Constanza et al. (2007) validate this overlap, arguing that quality of life is the extent to which basic human needs are fulfilled in relation to subjective wellbeing. The following section will consider some of the concepts around singing, initially exploring its primary functions, before looking at how it has impacted wellbeing and quality of life.

2.2 Why Singing?

Singing is an innate and highly accessible means of self-expression which links us back to our primary form of communication and intimacy as a baby (Malloch, 1999; Trevarthen and Aitken, 2001). Our first interactions with our care giver were intrinsically musical and Trevarthen and Malloch (2009) have coined the term Communicative Musicality to describe these musical 'conversations' and connections. More than just fulfilling a primary need as an infant, Pearce and colleagues (2015) have proposed that singing may have evolved in order to quickly bond together a group of people who do not know each other, encouraging them to co-ordinate. Singing with others is cohesive; we can connect through being synchronised and temporally aligned (Overy, 2012); people who sing together are 'literally being together in time' (DeNora, 2015, p.3). The synchronicity between people can bring a deep sense of communication and foster social bonding (DeNora, 2015). Welch (2005) argues that it is hard to separate singing from some sort of communicative aspect, it is relational, there is always a 'we' (DeNora, 2015). The act of singing, then, is implicitly and explicitly linked to communicating and connecting with others and this relational quality of singing relates to the wellbeing and quality of life models outlined above.

Singing has also been closely linked to the presentation of self and identity. DeNora (2015) noted that for sound to be produced, a singer must engage their whole physical body, which synchronises with itself. The singer, then, in effect, becomes the musical instrument and through their sound, they connect to themselves and communicate their thoughts and emotions. Singing is an expression of a person's inner self (Turino, 2008). Perhaps more than any other music making activity, it is linked to identity; singing with others and performing is a 'musical presentation of self' (DeNora, 2015, p.83). To sing is to reveal and present an aspect of your inner self and this self-awareness is a key aspect of Ruud's quality of life argument. Singing, then, is a primary, fundamental way for

humans to connect, communicate and present aspects of self, thus enabling wellbeing.

2.3 The Impact of Singing on Wellbeing and Quality of Life

There has been a growth in the number of new choirs and singing groups in the West in the last fifteen years (Reagon et al., 2016) and this rise has been reflected in research interest in this field. The focus has largely been around the positive health and wellbeing outcomes of engaging in group singing and some comprehensive reviews of current research have been complied (Gick, 2011; Clark and Harding, 2012; Clift, 2012; Reagon et al., 2016). There has been robust research that has identified specific benefits and this section will review seven outcomes that appear in the data. They are selected based on their pertinence to this study and the research participants who are homeless. The first three are loosely grouped as biological: breathing and lung function, pain and finally physiology and mood, which are researched concurrently. The next section focuses on psychological issues and explores cognitive effects, mental health and emotional wellbeing. The final section looks at the social implications. Each of the papers discussed has researched community singing groups and choirs, thus making a close match to the groups in this study. It is somewhat disingenuous singling out specific health or psychological issues in this way. As DeNora (2015) argues, to really understand any health or wellbeing benefit associated with making music, it must be explored within a 'social and ecological paradigm' (p.6) and in relation to the singer's 'symbolic and material environment' (p.30). One condition cannot be explored in isolation but is impacted by other variables, as) even within times of ill health, experiences of wellbeing will fluctuate (DeNora, 2015). However, these seven singing outcomes give an indication of different methods adopted when researching the benefits of singing and the outcomes, which inform this study.

(i) Studies have identified that singing can have a positive impact for breathing and supporting respiratory disorders. One study focuses on singers in choirs where no specific breathing issues were identified and the second was with groups for people who are affected by Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). The first was a large-scale international study with singers from choral societies, which investigated the benefits of singing for wellbeing and health (Clift and Hancox, 2010). The researchers gathered data through a questionnaire which included open questions to help bring a richer understanding of choir participation. Eighty-five of the one hundred and twenty-four study respondents were deemed to have relatively low psychological wellbeing and controlled deep breathing was reported as being one of the benefits they identified. These singers reported that it helped their anxiety and stress and led to a perception of feeling fit. This finding may be significant for the singers in this study who are homeless, as their condition is associated with low psychological wellbeing. Clift and colleagues (2008) at the Sydney De Hann Research Centre for Arts and Health, have proposed that controlled breathing is fundamental to wellbeing, as it engages the body and mind in a holistic way. Focusing on the breath is critical to mindful practices (Arch and Craske, 2006) and can bring people to a safe place and increase their sense of emotional stability.

Another approach to investigating the impact of singing on breathing was a study with a community singing group set up specifically to address breathing difficulties. The researchers, Skingley et al. (2013), looked at the effectiveness of group singing for people with COPD. This mixed-methods study gathered data through using spirometry to assess lung function, self-reports and open questionnaires at the start, mid-way and at the end of a ten-month singing intervention. The findings indicated better lung function for singers, with 65% seeing an improvement at the end of the intervention. Interestingly, it was the social impact that was discussed more widely in the self-reports and the use of the word ‘friend’ to describe other singers was used broadly. The singing groups

stopped after the ten months and this led to one singer reporting that they felt 'dumped' at the end by the process. This emphasises the importance of the social benefits that singers experience when they sing together but raises concerns about the ethics of creating singing communities in order to conduct research where no legacy has been built into the design of the study.

(ii) Singing may have a role to play in the management and acceptance of pain, acting as both a form of relaxation and as a distraction (Colwell, 1997). There are two approaches to the research in this area; one seeks to measure pain levels collecting quantitative data, using inventories and questionnaires (Colwell, 1997; Kenny and Faunce, 2004); the other adopts a qualitative approach, capturing the participants experience of pain through interviews. Kenny and Faunce's study (2004) is an example of the first approach where they looked at the impact of group singing on mood, coping and perceived pain. They set up as short-term group-singing intervention, with a comparison group that listened to singing while exercising and a control group who received no musical activity. They found that both the singers and music listeners showed some improvements in coping with their pain over the control group, but the results were not deemed to be significant. Hooper et al.'s study (2016) is an example of the other approach. The study was conducted with a service-led community pain choir (1997) set up to specifically address pain. They adopted a social constructionist position, using interviews to understand how being in the choir had impacted subjective experiences of pain, wellbeing and self-efficacy. The researchers identified that their findings linked to Ryff and Keyes' (1995) Wellbeing Model. Singers observed positive physical and emotional benefits, personal growth, and found the choir was a safe environment in which to make social connections and form new friendships. They also reported greater self-awareness and conducted identity work. This qualitative research method captures the singers' own experience of being in the world and living with pain and singing in the choir. This approach led to a more nuanced account of

how singing with others has an impact on pain and the wider positive implications on wellbeing.

(iii) There have been several studies that have investigated physiological changes that come from group singing with research that explore changes in hormones levels, enzymes and neurotransmitters. These studies often also explore the mood or emotional state of the singers (Beck et al., 2000; Valentine and Evans, 2001; Kreutz et al., 2004). A study with the cancer care choirs Tenovus, provides one robust example of the relationship between singing and physiology and biology (Fancourt et al., 2016). This research sought to explore whether people affected by cancer who sing in a choir experience a psychobiological response after one rehearsal. One hundred and ninety three participants affected by cancer including patients, carers and bereaved carers were involved. Members completed a questionnaire about their wellbeing, mental health, social function and resilience. They also had a mood test and gave a saliva sample at the beginning and the end of the rehearsal. This study showed an increase in positive effect, especially for singers with lower mental wellbeing, and decreased negative effect, particularly for those with higher anxiety and depression. This supports the Hedonic wellbeing model (Diener et al., 2003). The findings from the saliva test showed an increase in cytokines, which are linked to the immune system and a reduction in cortisol, a stress-related hormone. They also found a reduction in a protein linked to euphoria and a reduction in oxytocin, a hormone linked to social bonding and attachment. These last two findings were unexpected, and an increase in these levels had been anticipated.

Singing can be a cause of anxiety for some people. One piece of research has pointed to singing inducing stress and leading to increased emotional sweating, heart rate and blood pressure (Fechir et al., 2008). The intervention in Fechir et al.'s study (2008), was specifically designed to induce stress and involved participants performing a song alone, in another language, to an examiner. While

this may be an extreme singing condition, Dingle et al. (2012) also observed a stress response in vulnerable singers in a choir. They found that for some people, singing in public with others resulted in increased agitation, anxiety and fear of failure. While singing alone could be argued to induce more stress responses than singing in a group, researchers setting up singing interventions for specific health populations should be mindful that the activity may not be a therapeutic environment or positive activity for everyone. This link between singing and stress offers one explanation why some people who are homeless may not join a choir or be willing to sing in public even when a group is available.

(iv) The cognitive benefits of being involved in a choir appear to play a significant role for vulnerable singers (Bailey and Davidson, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2005; Clift and Hancox, 2010). One study investigated the correlation between quality of life, wellbeing, and health on choir participation for singers with low psychological wellbeing gathering information through a questionnaire (Clift and Hancox, 2010). Singers reported that participating enabled focused attention and concentration and helped to block out thoughts, switching singers off from mental personal preoccupations. They also reported it helped them to keep their mind active, through being involved in something challenging and worthwhile. This cognitive activity supports wellbeing by enhancing relaxation and bringing relief from stress. Bailey and Davidson (2005) conducted research using semi-structured interviews and focus groups with two choirs for people who had experienced homelessness and also ran a comparative study with eight middle-class choir singers. Singers from the first choir, made up of only people who are homeless, spoke about the mental stimulation they experienced, the concentration required and the benefits of focusing their energy on internal processes. The second choir that included some people who were homeless and other marginalised singers, spoke less about cognitive benefits but felt they were more mentally engaged when contributing to the decision-making for a performance. For the final group made

up of middle-class singers, the cognitive benefits came from being challenged and from a sense of achievement and improving their knowledge and skills as singers. The cognitive benefits of participating in a choir for vulnerable singers may be due to focusing on something beyond the self, engaging mental concentration and memory, which led to an experienced of mastery and competence (Bailey and Davidson, 2003). This reflects Csíkszentmihályi's theory of flow (1997), which describes a mental state so fully absorbed in an activity, that a sense of 'serenity' is experienced. He argued that this state of timelessness and lack of self-awareness can come from being engaged in a favourite activity, which 'could be singing in a choir' (p.29). Achieving flow, leads to people experiencing greater control and improves quality of life. These cognitive benefits seem highly relevant for singers experiencing homelessness and people suffering with mental health issues.

(v) Mental health is defined by The World Health Organisation as a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises their own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to their community (*World Health Organisation*, 2014). The stigmatising and debilitating condition of mental ill health can leave patients struggling to form intimate relationships, socially isolated and having difficulties adhering to routines and structure. Group singing has the potential to offer something of a successful and non-invasive, therapeutic, community-based intervention and bring support (Clift and Hancox, 2010; Dingle et al., 2012; Coulton et al., 2015). Many studies that have investigated the link between singing and wellbeing have found choirs and singing groups support good mental health (Skingley and Bungay, 2010; Clift and Morrison, 2011). There have been some studies that conducted research with groups that suffer from specific mental illnesses, such as a recent study with women with post-natal depression (Perkins et al., 2018). This study involved fifty-four women participating in either a ten week singing programme or a creative play group. The women were invited to share their reflections after the ten weeks

at a focus group. Both interventions brought social and emotional benefits, but the singing group led to a faster reduction in the symptoms of post-natal depression for those with moderate to severe symptoms. The researchers linked their findings to the two wellbeing models highlighted in the previous section: arguing that participating in the singing groups brought Hedonic benefits, with the women reporting a positive effect and feeling 'good' and Eudaimonic benefits with improvements with overall life quality.

The evidence that group singing can support mental health is particularly pertinent for this study. For people who are homeless, mental illness is well above the national average (Lovisi et al., 2003; *Homeless Link*, 2014) and this population have low rates of accessing health services. A group singing opportunity may offer a non-threatening means of supporting mental health issues for the singers who are homeless.

(vi) One of the most widely reported benefits for singers in choirs is a greater degree of emotional wellbeing (Clift and Hancox, 2001; Bailey and Davidson, 2002, 2005; Clift and Hancox, 2010; Von Lob et al., 2010). Ruud (1997b) proposes that being involved in music leads to a greater awareness of emotions, bringing deeper self-awareness, which can help stabilise identity (Ruud, 2016). From the findings around emotional health from studies conducted with choirs and community singing groups, three broad areas seem to emerge. Participation can have a positive impact on mood and feelings (Fancourt et al., 2016), it can help singers develop a greater sense of self (Cohen, 2012) and support emotional processing and regulation (Von Lob et al., 2010). The study that was conducted with people affected by cancer, highlighted in the previous section on physiological changes by Fancourt et al. (2016) shows how group singing can have a positive effect on the mood. Research by Cohen (2012) with a prison choir, gives an example of how participating in a choir can impact on prisoners' self-perceptions. Here singers developed a stronger sense of self through

increasing their self-esteem and self-worth. This choir involved twenty-two incarcerated singers and twenty-two community member singers. The research found that the prisoners' self-esteem and positive self-perception was developed through the relationships formed with the volunteers, by arousing feelings of competency and through the performances. These findings may be especially relevant when considering choir members who have experienced homelessness. Both populations live on the margins of society, experience stigma and have a socially imposed damaged identity (Magee, 2002; McCarthy, 2013).

Another research study with singers who were brought together through their shared experience of an adverse life event, provides some indication that group singing supports emotional processing and regulation (Von Lob et al., 2010). The sixteen singers in the study were interviewed to ascertain whether the group helped them cope with the challenging experience. Researchers found that participation supported emotional wellbeing, through accessing and expressing challenging emotions in a safe space: emotions were released though identifying with the emotional content of the lyrics. The emotional benefits gained through group singing seem to be particularly relevant to vulnerable singers and those who have experienced trauma.

(vii) A fundamental aspect of participating in choirs and singing groups is the social element. Group singing has a relational aspect and can connect and facilitate communication between people. Research has shown that singing in a group with others can be an effective environment for individuals to: build new meaningful relationships (Bailey and Davidson, 2002, 2005; Silber, 2005; Von Lob et al., 2010; Iliya, 2011); to feel accepted and supported (Bailey and Davidson, 2002, 2003); to feel less alone and isolated (Clift and Morrison 2011) and to harbour a sense of belonging (Bailey and Davidson, 2002; Iliya, 2011) and connectedness (Dingle et al., 2012). They provide a space to develop social skills and new healthy ways to relate to others, including developing better listening

skills (Bailey and Davidson, 2002; Silber, 2005). The social implications of bringing a group of people together to sing has already been seen with the singing groups set up for singers with COPD (Skingley et al., 2013). Here, the study participants formed an unexpected social link, which was unanticipated by the researchers.

This impact can translate beyond the confines of the choir, which Dingle and colleagues (2012) found in their study with a choir of disadvantaged singers. The choir they researched drew their members from many local agencies including alcohol, drug and homeless services. Twenty-one singers took part in semi-structured interviews and 89% of these participants experienced chronic mental health issues. The researchers found that after twelve months, members formed relationships which extended beyond rehearsals, resulting in invitations, shared lifts and phone calls. They found evidence that 'learning' how to form healthy relationships within the choir gave confidence to form new social links outside of choir, resulting in overall better relationships in life. The study also identified singers who felt reconnected with their local community, and were now 'getting back into life' (2012, p.11). The idea of connecting to a wider community and re-engaging with broader social networks seems to be of importance to more disadvantaged singers, where feelings of social exclusion are pertinent.

These seven singing outcomes that have emerged from the literature, illustrate some of the relevant biological, psychological and social aspects of singing with others. They help us understand why singing in a choir or community singing group may have a positive impact on wellbeing and quality of life. The list is by no means exhaustive and only the most prominent and relevant have been selected. Examples of qualitative and quantitative studies have indicated the breadth of methods adopted when researching this field and the range of different health groups and singing populations that have been investigated. The seven aspects explored correspond to the three wellbeing and quality of life models

explored at the start of the chapter. The positive physical impact of singing lends itself to explaining Hedonic wellbeing (Diener et al., 2003) where the social, psychological and emotional benefits, mirror the Eudaimonic and quality of life models (Ruud, 1997a; Ryff and Keyes, 1995).

Summary

Singing with other people can lead to positive outcomes that have an impact on the singers' wellbeing and quality of life. It may bring support physical health, cognitive and mental wellbeing and enable emotional awareness and regulation. It also creates the environment for increased opportunities for social interactions. These are significant positive outcomes for vulnerable and disadvantaged singers. The singing groups create a safe non-threatening environment where people can be together, sharing both space and time. While it is not proposing to be therapy, singing with others can bring therapeutic-like outcomes and these benefits can transfer to beyond the group, improving the quality of life of the singers. It can be experienced as a threatening and challenging experience to sing in public with others, though, so while participation may lead to positive health and wellbeing outcomes, it is not a social activity that will be appropriate for all.

2.4 Group Singing and Homeless

There is a very small field of research that has specifically explored choirs and community-based singing groups set up for people who have experienced homelessness. The following section will consider the seven known studies. It begins with a table that gives an overview of the research and is followed by a critical analysis of the work. The seven studies give some indication of the experience and outcomes of being in a homeless choir. Three specific criteria had to be met for the papers to be considered in the review: they had to involve a group of singers; the group had to be set up for singers who have experienced

homelessness and it had to be community-based. These criteria reflect the nature of the groups involved in this research study.

Author Year Location	Aim of the study	Sample	Research Methods	Findings
Bailey & Davidson 2001 Location not specified - assumed to be Canada	Does group singing promote adaptive behaviour?	7 men Choir for people who are homeless.	Qualitative Phenomenological Semi-structured interviews.	Clinical-type therapeutic benefits. Importance of the audience. Normalization through group process. Group singing and cognition. The findings have informed a proposed theory around group singing leading to improved quality of life.
Bailey & Davidson 2002 Canada	Does group singing promote adaptive behaviour?	7 men Choir for people who are homeless.	Qualitative Phenomenological Semi-structured interviews.	The importance of the Director. Clinical-type therapeutic benefits. Reciprocity between the choir and the public. Effects on social and mental engagement. The findings have informed a proposed theory around group singing leading to improved quality of life.
Bailey & Davidson (2003) Canada	Does being in a community singing group bring positive health and life satisfaction outcomes?	7 men Choir for people who are homeless.	Qualitative Phenomenological Semi-structured interviews Analysis; IPA	Emotional health and awareness Benefits of social interaction through performance. Benefits of Group Process. Benefits of mental stimulation. The findings relate to Ruud's (1997a) Quality of Life model.
Bailey & Davidson (2005) Canada	Explore the effects of group singing for homeless and	Study (i) Choir 1 7 men	Qualitative Phenomenological Semi-structured interviews	Findings from both studies showed: Clinical-type benefits. Effects of group process. Choir audience reciprocity.

	marginalised singers and middle-class singers.	Choir for people who are homeless Choir 2 8 participants Male and female. Choir for homeless and marginalised singers. Study (ii) Choir 3 8 participants, 7 male, 1 female. Middle-class singers from various choirs.	Analysis; IPA. Participants asked to make notes about specific topics, then discussed them in a focus group.	Cognitive stimulation. Differences between the homeless versus the middle-class singers within the themes.
Boal-Palheiros (2017) Portugal	Exploratory study looking at the significance of a homeless choir on the lives of its members.	42 members of a music ensemble for homeless adults with a focus on singing. 38 male, 4 female.	Qualitative Interpretive case study. Semi-structured interview with group leader. Informal talks with group members Observational field notes.	Role of the Director. Sense of accomplishment and self-confidence. Institutional and staff support. Good interpersonal relationships. Sense of belonging. Developing music and group identity. Social skills. Resilience. Importance of repertoire.

Cronley et al. (2018) USA	Investigating the psychosocial characteristics of singers in a homeless choir and the relationship between the profiles of individual singers and choir attendance.	111 participants. Choir for people with experience of homelessness.	Survey.	5 profiles based on 1.Singers being housed or homeless. 2.Levels of resilience and vulnerabilities, stress and mental health issues. 3.Singers being African-American or non-African American. 4.Higher resilience correlates to more sustained choir attendance. 5.Non-African American singers more likely to commit. Housed singers are more likely to commit.
Nordberg et al. (2018) USA	Exploring the experience of choral involvement for people experiencing homelessness.	20 choir members,13 male, 7 female. Choir for people experiencing homelessness.	Interviews Analysis; IPA.	Rules that structure participation. Social belonging. Developing capacity for change. Shifting paradigms – finding a voice and new possible futures. Physical and emotional healing.

Table 1. Overview of Singing and Homelessness Research

These seven papers directly relate to the research topic for this study. The studies investigate community-based singing groups set up for people who are homeless. Bailey and Davidson (2001, 2002, 2003, 2005) opened the field with their ground-breaking research with groups in Canada; there is no known research with singing groups set up for people who are homeless before their work. These papers were published between 2001 and 2005 and then there was gap until 2017, with Boal-Palherios' (2017) exploratory study with Som da Rua (Sound of the Street) in Portugal. This was followed in quick succession with two papers in 2018 (Cronley et al., 2018; Nordberg et al., 2018), which conducted research with the Dallas Street Choir in America. The gap between 2005 and 2017 raises an interesting question, as does the speed of the last three papers published. The work of Jane Davidson, who conducted her studies with her PhD student Betty Bailey in Canada, did not undertake research to explore homeless choirs per se. Their interest was in understanding how singing in an amateur choir led to adaptive characteristics and, in their own words, the fact it was a homeless choir just 'provided an unusual and expedient opportunity' (2002, p.229). The more recent papers published in 2017 and 2018, indicates a growing interest in trying to uncover what is happening in choirs set up for people who are homeless, mirroring the motivation behind this study. This new research interest echoes the rise in arts and music groups being set up around the world for people who are homeless and the recent launch of the international arts and homelessness movement, With One Voice (2019a), which indicates a growing interest in music groups for this population.

From a geographical perspective all seven of the academic papers were conducted with groups in three developed countries; USA, Portugal and Canada. The research for this thesis is the first research conducted in the UK and reflects the growth of and interest in new music groups for people who are homeless (With One Voice, 2019a; Coyne, 2018). It is also the first conducted with groups in a developing country.

This is currently a very small and under-researched field which may explain why the research methods have predominantly used a qualitative approach and been exploratory. They all used interviews to gather data, with Boal-Palherios (2017) also using additional field notes and Bailey and Davidson in their 2005 study comparing the homeless choir to a middle-class choir, running a focus group with the middle-class singers. The only quantitative research was conducted by Cronley et al. (2018) which explored the housing demographic of the singers in a homeless choir, their psychosocial characteristics and choir attendance. The same choir, the Dallas Street Choir was part of a qualitative study the same year.

From the qualitative papers three key themes emerged, which found the groups bring social, emotional and cognitive benefits. The positive emotional impact of participating was evident across the studies, with group members experiencing positive emotional states, such a joy, happiness and feeling good (Bailey and Davidson, 2001; Nordberg et al., 2018). Singers reported that being in the groups enabled them to explore difficult emotions (Bailey and Davidson, 2001) and through singing these emotions could be released (Bailey and Davidson, 2003). Participating also evoked feelings of pride (Bailey and Davidson, 2003) and accomplishment (Boal-Palheiros, 2017). This impact led to emotional healing (Bailey and Davidson, 2005; Nordberg et al., 2018); a 'panacea for pain' (Nordberg et al., 2018, p.18). The social aspect of being in the groups was another theme that occurred in all the qualitative papers. Socially engaging with others brought positive outcomes, with singers fostering respect for other group members (Bailey and Davidson, 2001) and developing social skills (Bailey and Davidson, 2002). The term 'family' was used to describe the connection in the Dallas Street Choir and singers experienced social bonding (Nordberg et al., 2018). This connection happened between singers, but also occurred with the group leader who was described as a brother or father. The impact of interacting with the audience at performances was noted in all the studies and this connection brought feelings of self-esteem (Boal-Palheiros, 2017), pride and empowerment (Bailey and Davidson, 2005).

Singers felt they had something to give through their performance (Bailey and Davidson, 2001), and being involved in an exchange with the audience (Bailey and Davidson, 2002). They created the space to feel normal, accepted (Nordberg et al., 2018) and connected to wider society (Bailey and Davidson, 2005), helping to de-stigmatise homelessness (Nordberg et al., 2018).

Along with the social and emotional benefits, another key finding from the qualitative data was the positive impact on cognitive health. Increased concentration and focus, as well as a reduced preoccupation with the self, were key findings through Bailey and Davidson's research (2001, 2002, 2003, 2005). They recognised the relevance of flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997) for choir members who are homeless. They argued that through the singers investing cognitive energy in the demands of choral singing, this led to a greater sense of being in control of life and this increased general satisfaction (Bailey and Davidson, 2001). Social, emotional and cognitive benefits have already been observed with other singing populations, as outlined in the previous section, which suggests these broad benefits are a common outcome of singing with others. However, the experience of homelessness is particularly traumatic and has a damaging effect on the individual and their social and emotional wellbeing, which will be explored in the following section. The role of the choir, then, to support wellbeing and quality of life is especially pertinent for this population. Boal-Palheiros (2017) argued that when singers are involved in an activity that is 'apart from the rest of their everyday lives' (p.76), it helps them cope with life outside of the group. Nordberg et al. (2018) recognised that the choir brought new possibilities for singers who are homeless by opening new doors and bringing a capacity for change. These findings suggest that engaging in the choirs brings benefits for singers beyond the groups. The papers also showed how relationships could be challenging for people in the singing groups. Bailey and Davidson (2002, 2003) spoke of the confrontations between singers and how singers challenged the authority of their leader (2002).

Through the quantitative research findings, data emerged about the demographic of one homeless choir. Cronley and her colleagues in 2018, conducted research with one hundred and eleven participants to look at the psychosocial characteristics of the singers in a homeless choir. Using a survey to collect their data, they produced five profiles based on the singers' housing status, race and level of vulnerability and resilience. The researchers found that the higher the resilience of a singer the more likely they are to sustain attendance at a rehearsal and attendance was impacted by housing; those who were formally homeless, but now housed, were more likely to continue to sing with the choir. The paper also found that the non-African American singers in the choir were most likely to commit long term. While the qualitative data gives a rich and nuanced picture of the choir experience, this sole quantitative paper provides useful information about who attends a homeless choir and at what stage a group is most likely to be accessed in a person's pathway through homelessness.

2.5 Music Engagement and Homelessness

The studies analysed in the previous section give some indication of the experience of participating in a homeless choir. As there were only seven relevant papers, it is useful to broaden the scope and explore other research relating to music and homelessness. The following section explores research that involves other group music-making activities with homeless musicians. It begins by exploring research that has been conducted with people who are homeless and involved in music therapy sessions, then considers a paper on music listening and another on young people who are homeless making music in a studio. Exploring the impact of these music-making activities brings a wider perspective to the field and helps to frame this research study.

There is a small but growing body of work that has been conducted using music therapy with people who are homeless. Six studies will be considered. Four were conducted with men who reside in homeless shelters (Rio, 2005;

Shapiro, 2005; Iliya, 2011; Cohen and Silverman, 2013) or ex-shelter residents who have transitioned out into their own accommodation (Rio, 2005). Two were with pre-adolescent girls and their families accessing a Homeless Children's Specialist Support Service which supports children through the homeless and family violence system (Fairchild et al., 2017; Fairchild and Mcferran, 2019). Music therapy became a recognised professional practice in the 1950s seeking to bring about non-musical therapeutic outcomes for clients, supporting health, social and emotional goals through music-making (Fairchild and Mcferran, 2018). The work is person-centred with the therapist drawing on song-writing, music listening, playing instruments and improvisation to meet the therapeutic goals. All the studies explored involved small groups and there was an element of singing.

The studies conducted with men living in a homeless shelter all found that participating in the group led to social benefits and a deeper connection to self. The music sessions brought opportunities to the men to form meaningful relationships and socially engage. Shapiro (2005), the music therapist and researcher, recognised his clients were particularly able to connect through improvising together. Rio (2005) observed his group members felt a sense of closeness and connection to the other men and experienced feeling supported. Iliya (2011) went further and said the men in her group experienced a sense of belonging and acceptance of others. Another key finding from these four studies was around the musicians connecting to a deeper sense of self. Rio (2005) spoke of his clients developing their emotional expression and, through the singing, shared experiences of loss, grief and joy. This connection to the self was mirrored in Shapiro's work (2005) who found his clients had developed greater self-acceptance, with one announcing, 'I am here' (p. 32), experiencing feelings of validation and recognition through the music. This suggests the clients were engaged in identity work through the session. These emerging themes around positive relationships and self-connection tie in with the wellbeing (Ryff and Keyes, 1995) and quality of life (Ruud, 1997a) models. There was a greater sense of meaning and coherence

in life (Rio, 2005) for the men who were homeless and involved in music therapy. It is interesting and significant that making positive social connections was a key theme in the music therapy research and mirrors the findings from the studies with choirs and community singing groups set up for singers who are homeless. However, emotional expression and link to a strong sense of self was less prominent in the findings from the choirs. This may be due to the intimacy of a music therapy session and the intensity of being in a small group where the music is led by the clients rather than a choir leader.

Exploring music therapy sessions with children and their families affected by homelessness and family violence adds further understanding around the impact of making music and performing for people who are homeless. While child homelessness is a different experience to that of adults, one research study identified two themes that may be experienced by other people experiencing homelessness and engaging in music (Fairchild and Mcferran, 2019). The study involved fifteen children aged eight to fourteen working collaboratively to write a song, and data was collected through brain-storming ideas for the song's lyrics. The aim of the study was to understand how children use music in the context of family violence and homelessness and to give them a voice. The researchers found that music could be an escape from the outside world, creating a haven, a 'musical cocoon'. This concept mirrors DeNora's theory of music asylums (2015), which proposes that music listening and making music with others can create places of removal and safety. The findings raised another significant and relevant theme, that music leads to feelings of hope for people who are homeless. This ties with a finding from the homeless choir papers, that singing with others can open doors (Nordberg, et al., 2018) and the singers are 'messengers of hope' (Bailey and Davidson, 2001, p.28). Music not only brings possibilities of new futures, but when the singers perform, they inspire others who are disadvantaged to be more positive about their future.

Another piece of research was conducted with the same child support centre looking at the meaning and impact of the children performing to family members and the experience of being a family member in the audience (Fairchild et al., 2017). The most significant theme that emerged from the children was the social impact of performing and how it strengthened relationships. The children reported they felt more connected to their peers who were also performing and experienced a closer connection to their family members who were in the audience. This finding may be transferable to all music performers who are homeless. The family members in the audience made a further interesting observation: that the performances influenced how they viewed their performing children. Parents said they saw them in a more positive light and authors suggest performances allow the audience to view people 'through a different lens' (p.46). They can be peak opportunity for social connections through shared experiences and for people who are homeless to challenge the perception of audience members.

Most of the research around music and homelessness has focused on choirs for people who are homeless and music therapy sessions. There is a small number of papers that have researched music-making with young people beyond these contexts. One study looked at music listening (Woelfer and Lee, 2012) and another explored the impact of young people being involved in making music in a studio as part of a homeless programme (Kelly, 2017). These contexts may appear to be quite different to this study, yet both papers highlighted the wellbeing benefits of being involved in music and referred to social connections that were formed. The young people who spent time in a music studio and the music listeners both experienced this cultural engagement as an escape from their current challenging situations. This reinforces the findings from the homeless choirs, that participating in music can lead to positive social interactions, offer an escape from the challenges of homelessness and support wellbeing.

Summary

The studies with homeless choir's mirror many of the benefits seen with non-homeless groups, revealing positive emotional, social and cognitive effects. Exploring a wider field of research with people who are homeless engaging in other musical activities reinforces these wellbeing outcomes, but also raises other findings: that music can be an escape from the experiences of homelessness and bring a capacity for change and hope for a different future. The importance of performances has been evident throughout the homeless music research. With the homeless choirs, the adult singers experienced positive emotions: performers had feelings of pride, empowerment and self-esteem. The performances brought an opportunity for singers to feel 'normal' through being involved in a public activity and interacting with society, while giving something to an audience. This exchange reduced the stigma of homelessness. For the child performers, there was a positive social impact, they felt more connected to the performing peers and their families in the audience. The audience members also shifted the way they perceived the performers.

2.6 Community Music

Community music is a growing field of practice, where music-making is situated in non-formal community-based settings and can lead to both musical and therapeutic outcomes. It is a rapidly expanding area, both in terms of practice and research and as a result, there is an urge to professionalise the work and to establish theoretic frameworks to help understand the work. This has already been introduced and developed in the fields of music education and music therapy. The seven research studies explored in the previous section that investigated homeless choirs all correspond to a theoretical model of community music (Higgins, 2012). The following section will explore the recent theory which underpins this study.

A conceptual model proposed by MacDonald et al. (2013) explains how music can have a positive impact on health and wellbeing and this model includes music therapy, community music and music education. The model demonstrates how community music and music therapy overlap with the emergence of the recent field called community music therapy (Ansdell, 2014). Music therapy and community music therapy are, however, firmly underpinned by specific theory (Stige, 2015), and are considered an established psychological clinical intervention (British Association for Music Therapy, 2017). Only those trained in the discipline can call themselves music therapists, however, many of the same therapeutic-like outcomes emerge from work conducted within the field of community music.

The choirs and singing groups in this study fall within the field of community music, which has recently developed its own emerging framework. It is currently being defined in terms of practise and research but has historically lacked a clear definition, failing to be viewed with any professional status (Ansdell, 2010). Its strengths lie in its flexibility and lack of distinctiveness, but this has meant that it has not received the same validation as other music wellbeing fields such as music education or music therapy. This section will begin by giving a brief overview of how the term community music is understood and then will introduce a recent theoretical framework to support the practice.

Community music was traditionally viewed as a ‘protest against the dominant culture’ (Higgins, 2012, p.42) and emerged as a resistance to the ‘high’ art of the establishment in the 1970s. The 1980s saw three key events that marked a change in the field and reflected a surge of activity both in practice and academia. A key turning point was an education manager being employed to support a professional orchestra and the second was the International Society for Music Education creating a Community Music Commission (Higgins, 2012). Another significant event was the first national community music conference, Making Connections in 1989. This led to a working definition being produced

and the formation of Sound Sense (Deane and Mullen, 2013), a professional association for community musicians. It is still continuing to play a pioneering role in developing community music practice in the UK today.
They produced a definition of community music in 1994, which is still adhered to today. It states that:

> Community Music involves musicians from any musical discipline working with groups of people to enable them to develop active and creative participation in music.
> Community Music is concerned with putting equal opportunities into practice.
> Community Music can happen in all types of community, whether based on place, institution, interest, age, or gender group where it reflects the context in which it takes place.
>
> (MacDonald, 1995 quoted in Higgins, 2012, p.53-54)

The launch of the *International Journal of Community Music* in 2008 marked a shift in the validation of academic interest. Recently, a new journal for students and early career researchers called *Transform: New Voices in Community Music,* published its first edition in 2018, heralding further interest in research within the field.

Lee Higgins (2012) produced a framework to help explain and understand community music. Three of the central pillars of the work were: hospitality, the event and safety without safety. Higgins argued that the term 'community' is problematic and is dependent on context and would be better exchanged for the term 'hospitality'. This term is more inclusive and better describes the invitation and welcome shown to those who wish to participate. The second pillar acknowledges that the workshop, rehearsal or session is an '*event'*. It is a temporal and spatial happening; it occurs in a certain place at a certain time. However, the walls are 'porous' and permeable, making it a 'deterritorialized', democratic space. The third pillar is the term 'safety without safety' (p. 150), which describes the community music space as one of invention and is open to 'exploration and experimentation' (p. 146). It refers to the rules that must

be in place in order to create a place of safety but argues that they must be flexible and there should not be too many restraints. Although community music research and practice have a very strong international evidence of good practise, much of the theory has been proposed and discussed by those working in developed countries. This is useful to consider when thinking about the research in this thesis, conducted in Rio. The theory has been well received by practitioners, academics and people teaching community music as well as by people working in the field of music education (Cohen, 2012; West and Cremata, 2016; Harrop-Allin, 2017).

2.7 Conclusion

Singing has a primary purpose to connect people and is a relational social activity. Research studies with choirs and singing groups indicate that participation can lead to physical and psychological benefits with singers who are homeless, especially reporting cognitive, social and emotional benefits. People who are homeless, who engage in music, report that participating can be an escape and enable people to imagine a more hopeful positive future. Performances played a key role in helping people who were homeless to feel 'normal' and to connect with society. The studies that have been explored in this review of the literature, have helped build a picture of the impact on wellbeing of group singing.

This review has informed the focus of this research and my decision to adopt a qualitative approach. It will enable a nuanced and rich understanding of the singing groups to emerge and the tensions, challenges and benefits to be explored. It will make a vital contribution to this small and emerging research field.

Chapter 3 What is it about Homelessness?

> 'Homelessness therefore may involve a lack of material shelter, lack of privacy, lack of comfort, lack of citizenship rights, lack of ownership over space…lacking space to develop intimate relationships; lacking a sense of belonging, and with it a secure sense of identity' (McNaughton, 2008, p.7)

Homelessness is a multi-dimensional condition (Somerville, 2013), underpinned by poverty (Bramley and Fitzpatrick, 2018), which has a negative impact on wellbeing (Thomas et al., 2012b). The first chapter in this thesis indicated the enormity of the problem in the UK and Rio, offering a brief overview of the condition and the outcome on health. This chapter examines homelessness in the UK and Rio through exploring relevant theory and research. It begins by outlining current debates around defining the condition, before exploring how people who are homeless understand the lived experience. It looks in detail at the four specific elements of homelessness: social and relational aspects, health and substance misuse, issues around negotiating space and finally the stigma associated with the condition and the impact on identity.

3.1 Homelessness in the UK and Rio

UK

The homeless situation in the UK has escalated since the financial crisis of 2008 with the situation being exacerbated by the lack of social housing and recent government changes around welfare benefits. A freeze on the Local Housing Allowance introduced in 2016 (Fitzpatrick et al., 2019a) has impacted households where income or housing allowance is insufficient to cover the cost of rent. It has led to an unprecedented amount of evictions from private properties (Fitzpatrick et al., 2019a). In 2015 the government introduced a four year freeze on working age benefits and tax credits, which Joseph Rowntree Foundation predict will force 400,000 people into poverty in the UK by the time

the freeze is lifted (Barnard, 2019). The introduction of Universal Credit has also had a significant impact on the rising numbers of people affected by homelessness. The level of hardship experienced due to delays in its implementation have been described as causing 'destitution' (Fitzpatrick et al., 2019a) and once it has been fully rolled out, it is anticipated that it will increase homelessness nationally (Fitzpatrick et al., 2019a). These austerity measures have reduced the security offered by the state, minimising the 'social safety net' (Alston, 2019, p.4) and increasing the numbers of people living in poverty. It is anticipated that Brexit will impact the current situation, and the harder the Brexit, the bigger the impact on rising levels of homelessness (Fitzpatrick et al., 2019a). The annual numbers of people presenting to local councils as homeless, and the lack of social housing in both Scotland and England has resulted a rise in the numbers of homeless households moving into temporary accommodation, which holds people within the homeless system.

An independent report by the United Nations on the impact of poverty in the UK (Alston, 2019) argued that the current Conservative government has deliberately removed the social 'glue' that held British communities together by closing libraries and community centres and selling off public spaces. The music therapist Rudd (1997a) has observed that lack of social cohesion is the biggest threat to people's quality of life. The approach adopted by the government may account for the social isolation and loneliness that the UK is experiencing (Age UK, 2018). The government, strongly refute the findings of the UN report and argue that the growth in the economy and the low unemployment rates all indicate a positive shift for the UK (Alston, 2019).

England

Homelessness has led to a state of 'crisis' being declared in England in 2018 with councils unable to cope with the numbers of people requiring accommodation, especially outside of London (Fitzpatrick et al., 2018). 78,000 families and individuals were placed in temporary accommodation in 2018, a rise of 60% since 2012. However the numbers have since levelled out

(Fitzpatrick et al., 2019a). The national annual rough sleeping count has indicated that these numbers have also plateaued, which in part is reflected by the drop in the number of non-British European nationals reported on the street.

Homeless charities and local councils have welcomed a shift in the government's response to homelessness, with the British government committing to address the national crisis. Prime Minister May pledged to end rough sleeping by 2027 and established a Homeless and Rough Sleeping Implementation Taskforce (Fitzpatrick et al., 2018). The introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 in England (Garvie, 2018a), has received support from third sector organisations, such as Crisis and Shelter, with its focus on prevention and relief of homelessness in England. While the Act has also been credited with reducing the numbers of street sleepers, it has also had a positive impact on homeless applications to local councils (Fitzpatrick et al., 2019a). A government white paper in 2017 (GOV.UK, 2017) set out a commitment to address the housing crisis in England, with an ambitious target in the 2017 budget for 300,000 new homes to be built. While the target is unlikely to be fully realised annually, the investment in housing is predicted to have a positive impact on the housing crisis. However, England has continued to offer those in social housing the Right to Buy their council home (Fitzpatrick et al., 2019) diminishing the stock of council homes.

Scotland

Scotland introduced some of the most progressive policies around homelessness in Europe with Scottish local authorities given a wider duty to assist non-priority homeless households than anywhere else in the UK (Fitzpatrick et al., 2015). The Right to Buy scheme has been scrapped, but the same issues around the lack of social housing, as in England, are faced by councils assisting those who are homeless. Homeless applications to Scottish local authorities fell between 2008 and 2017, as a result of the Housing Options prevention policy rolled out across the country (Fitzpatrick et

al., 2019). In 2012, Scotland abolished the poverty needs test, which increased local authorities' duty to offer accommodation to non-priority homeless people. However, where housing applications had fallen before 2017, by 2018 they had increased by 1%, to 34,950 (Fitzpatrick et al., 2019). The Scottish government and homeless charities believe the preventative measures introduced by local authorities have maximised their impact and now are unlikely to bring any further reduction in homeless applications. There is no official count of street sleepers in Scotland, but trends captured by the Homeless Monitor for Scotland (Fitzpatrick et al., 2019), which considers data gathered from local authorities, the Scottish Housing Survey data and evidence-based assumptions, believe that that rough sleeping over the country has plateaued since 2014.

The devolved Scottish parliament have committed to make homelessness a political priority. Scotland introduced a Homeless and Rough Sleeping Action Group which has informed the Scottish governments Ending Homeless Together Action Plan (Scottish Government, 2018). The recommendations have received cross party support and outline a person-centered approach to preventing and responding to homelessness. It focuses on prioritising settled housing for people and offering a more joined up approach to planning and resources in order to end homelessness in Scotland.

Rio

The numbers of people experiencing destitution in Brazil is more severe than the UK, with one third of the population living in extreme poverty (Lovisi et al., 2007). 43% living in inadequate housing, 22% having no access to drinking water and 69% having no sewage system (Habitat for Humanity, 2019). The national figure for homelessness was estimated in 2015 at 101,854 by the Institute for Applied Economic Research (Natalino, 2016). Rodrigo Abel, the Sub Secretary of Social Development for Rio gave an interview with Peacock and Heritage (2014) for their With One Voice feasibility study referred to in Chapter 1. His department estimated that at least 10,000 different people slept

on the street in the city in 2013. The Homeless World Cup (Global Homelessness Statistics, 2019) put the figure of street sleepers in Rio at 14,200 in 2017 and suggested there had been a 150% rise over the last three years. This figure explains the visibility of the condition in a city that has a population of 6.4 million. It should be noted that some people are economic street sleepers, 'living' outside in the heart of Rio during the working week, where they can make a living, rather than making a daily four commute from areas of Greater Rio (Heritage and Peacock, 2014).

Social Support in the UK and Rio

Statutory support offered in the UK to people who are homeless is significantly higher than people can expect in Rio. Councils runs a network of accommodation through shelters, hostels and supported housing and also employ community case workers to assist in matters around housing (Coyne, 2018). There is further support is available from small charities, organisations and churches who run services in community venues and on the street. The large national charities, Crisis, Shelter and The Salvation Army not only offer direct services, but also play a significant role in addressing the attitudes of the public and influencing policy.

Financial assistance in the form of state benefits is available in the UK (Shelter, 2019b) and this monetary safety net contrasts with the support for people who are homeless in Rio. In Brazil there is no statutory duty to help people who are homeless and in Rio there is no infrastructure for delivering services (Heritage and Peacock, 2014). There are thirty-one state homeless hostels in Rio but no accurate data around how many beds are available. Outreach workers visit people who are street sleeping to inform them about the hostels, but NGOs and local churches offer the most direct support, providing food and blankets. The attitude of the general public is 'antagonistic' and people who live on the streets (Heritage and Peacock, 2014) claim that they must remain invisible and unseen in order to survive and escape being removed or experience violence (Schmidt and Robaina, 2017). A recent shift in the attitudes, though, is

reflected in the state library Biblioteca Parque, that has adopted a policy of welcoming in people who are homeless to use the facilities. Another marked change is with the governments Public Defence Office, who visit people on the street to record and address human right violations by the public and the police and assist in helping people to recover their identification documents.

3.2 How is Homelessness Defined?

Academics, policy makers, and third sector organisations offer different approaches to understanding the condition of homelessness. It can be viewed through many different lenses: cultural, social, health, political or through an official statutory context. Exploring the perspective of those with lived experience brings a further understanding. Chamberlain and Mackenzie (1992) argue that in order to address and alleviate homelessness, the condition must be defined and this is critical for holding governments to account. Three key perspectives of homelessness are the literal, statutory and cultural definitions.

The literal perspective (Chamberlain and Johnson, 2001) is routinely dismissed by those seriously interested in understanding the field, as it reduces homelessness to an image of a single man who is dishevelled and ravaged by mental health issues and addictions. This distorted impression perpetuates the myths and lack of knowledge about the condition and focuses on the 'imperfections' (Snow et al., 1994) reducing homelessness to a pathological issue. The ethnographer Duneier (2001) argues that it is like a photograph come to life, with a person afforded no past or story or experience of life. It is a perspective often portrayed in the press, and not only gives a false depiction of the types of people who experience homelessness, but also fails to provide any meaning or context to the experience. Phelan and colleagues (Phelan et al., 1997) argue that perpetuating this image adds to the stigma of homelessness.

A statutory perspective on homelessness is specific to each country and McNaughton (2008) describes this as the people and circumstances that the state must accommodate when someone is without a home. In Scotland the statutory definition of a person who qualifies as being homeless is defined as having no accommodation, or their housing situation is violent, overcrowded, unclean or unsafe (Scottish Government, 2017). They also qualify if they live in temporary accommodation, like a hostel, a Bed and Breakfast or a refuge. Statutory support in Scotland is legally available for people who meet this criterion or are at risk of homelessness. This perspective only accounts for people who present themselves to the council: street sleepers, the hidden homeless, or those who are unwilling to approach a local council for support are not included in this perspective.

Another definition based on housing status is proposed by sociologists Chamberlain and Johnson (2001) and describes the cultural definition of homelessness, offering an objective perspective. They argue that homelessness and inadequate housing are socially constructed concepts and the term only has meaning when considered within a specific culture. An acceptable community standard of housing must be found for a specific region and anyone who falls below that line is classed as homeless. Homelessness from this perspective is culturally specific. This definition and the statutory perspective are both based only on housing status and fail to consider the experience of the person involved or a wider social context.

Others describe homelessness as a relational and social issue. The subjective perspective of homelessness (Chamberlain and Johnson, 2001) is based on a person's experience, focusing on what constitutes a 'home' rather what is perceived as adequate 'housing' (Stebbing, 2017). Supporters of the cultural definition criticise this model arguing the line between housed and homeless is too arbitrary as it is based on one person's perspective. Where a type of accommodation might be experienced as 'home' for one person, for another it

may be inadequate and render them homeless (Chamberlain and Johnson, 2001).

The importance of relationships when defining homelessness is also evident in Catherine Robinson's (2002) perspective where she has proposed an alternative terminology and coined the term *home(less).* She is critical of the objective cultural definition arguing that it fails to consider the perspectives and lived experience of the people being discussed. Her research has been conducted with young people who have experienced homelessness in Sydney. She believes that viewing homelessness as the absence of home (2002) and a 'condition of lack' (p.32) where solutions are offered to 'fix' the condition, denies the experience of the people concerned. She observed participants creating a 'home' though personal relationships and by fostering a sense of belonging with others. For Robinson, homelessness has less to do with a building and more to do with connectivity to others (2001). This argument of defining and understanding homelessness as a social and relation issue has gained momentum. Bell and Walsh (2015) with their research with men who live in a homeless shelter, concluded that homelessness was less about 'rooflessness' and more about the lack of support networks and feeling excluded from society. This idea suggests that some of the experiences of homelessness may mitigated by forming meaningful relationships with other people.

Neil and Fopp (1992, quoted in Robinson, 2002) have opened-up the definition even further and produced a list defining what constitutes a home, making the argument that is more than a physical space and a place for relationships.

Characteristics of a Home

Security of tenure
Adequate physical standards
Social relations
Personal security
Affordability
Privacy
Control and autonomy
Identity
Access
Compatibility
Appropriateness
(Neil and Fopp, 1992, quoted in Robinson, 2002, p.32)

This model is person-centered and proposes that home is a place of safety, privacy, relationships and having control over the environment. It offers an explanation to help understand the social and psychological issues relating to those who lack a home and supports the argument that homelessness is more than having adequate housing. It is interesting that the list relates home to identity, as this chapter will go on to propose that homelessness is linked to the adoption of a stigmatising social identity which people seek to reconcile (Snow and Anderson, 1993). Some of the aspects of home in the above list correlate to key elements in Ryff & Keyes (1995) wellbeing model. They proposed that wellbeing is about forming quality relationships and having control and autonomy over life experiences. Homelessness and the loss of a home equates to a lack of relationships, control, autonomy and safety, which has a negative impact on wellbeing (Thomas et al., 2012).

The correlation between creating aspects of home and supporting wellbeing relates well to the experience of participating in a homeless choir. The previous chapter has outlined that participating in groups brings opportunities for social interaction, helping people who are homeless to form meaningful relationships and feel supported by others (Bailey and Davidson, 2002, 2003, 2005), bringing a sense of belonging (Nordberg, et al., 2018) and connectedness (Dingle et al., 2012). Singers who are homeless may

experience a sense of ‘home’ through participating in the groups, forming meaningful relationships and fostering a sense of belonging. Ruud (1997a) has argued in his quality of life model that fostering this sense of belonging through making music with others leads to feelings ‘of being <<home>>’ (p.95).

These social and relational definitions of homelessness and the wellbeing and quality of life model raise the question of whether experiences of homelessness can be positively addressed through forming meaningful relationships and having an opportunity to experience safety, autonomy and control.

3.3 What is Homelessness?

Exploring how people who are homeless perceive their situation brings a deeper understanding of the condition. The ethnographic research that Gowan (2010) conducted with homeless can-recyclers in San Francisco gave some insight into their perspective. She spent five years living, working and researching alongside her ‘research companions’ and her discourse analysis led to three accounts of a homeless experience. These offer a framework with which to explore the causes, management and responses to homelessness. She describes the three ways her homeless participants understood their experience of homelessness as sin-talk, system-talk and sick-talk. Sin-talk describes the experience of the person who is homeless being culpable for their own situation and worthy of blame, punishment and exclusion (Somerville, 2013). Sick-talk looks at homelessness through a pathological lens, where the person is seen as ill or defective, with the focus on mental health issues, addictions and illnesses. Finally, system-talk looks to wider social and political structures to account for homelessness looking for policy changes to address the situation. These three descriptions are reflected in the types of homelessness research that is conducted by others.

Academic studies can distort how homelessness is perceived and can diminish the 'humanity' of the research participants who are homeless (Somerville, 2013). One area of interest looks at the pathology of homelessness, exploring issues of physical and mental health, addictions, or social exclusion. An example of this type of interest is Fazel et al.'s (2008) research which was interested in 'the prevalence of psychotic illness, major depression, alcohol and drug dependence' (p.1670). They reviewed twenty-nine surveys from people who are homeless from seven countries investigating serious mental health disorders. This area of homeless research mirrors the sick-talk that Gowan (2010) observed with its focus on inability and incapacity.

Another area of research interest explores the impact of larger structural forces that impact homelessness and mirrors Gowan's system-talk (2010). This angle has been favoured in the UK more recently which Bramley and Fitzpatrick (2018) argue is in an attempt to avoid the 'blameworthiness' of heavily focusing on 'personal vulnerabilities'. Blasi (1994) maintains that research which focuses on one or the other gives a distorted picture of the homeless experience and a 'blended' approach is more helpful (Bramley and Fitzpatrick, 2018). The more current explanation is that homelessness occurs when structural forces create the appropriate conditions, leaving people with personal problems more vulnerable and susceptible to social and economic trends (Fitzpatrick, 2005). This argument challenges the myth that anyone could be only two pay-checks away from homelessness (Marsh, 2016) and supports the idea that childhood poverty is the biggest predictor of homelessness (Bramley and Fitzpatrick, 2018).

Understanding homelessness from this more 'blended' (Bramely and Fitzpatrick, 2018) perspective leads to a deeper understanding of a person's homeless experience. There have been some insightful ethnographies on homelessness that have succeeded in exploring both the social and political environment alongside personal circumstances. These pieces of research avoid 'ethnographic fallacies' (Burawoy, 2013), a criticism aimed at

researchers who become so immersed in the environment they are inhabiting that they fail to observe and account for the larger macro structural influences (Duneier, 1999). These ethnographies give a view of homelessness though understanding challenging behaviour 'in the situational context in which they are embedded' (Snow et al., 1994, p.472). Some of the most influential work has come from the USA. Snow and Anderson's, *Down on their Luck* (1993) is considered a classic ethnography, recounting the lives of predominantly homeless men on the streets of Austin Texas in the mid-1980s. It categorises the homeless people who use The Salvation Army shelter, based on the length of time they have been on the streets and compares their experiences and the different survival behaviours they adopt. Duneier's *Sidewalk* (2001), is another exemplar account, focusing on the table sellers, table watchers and pan handlers who occupy a pavement on Sixth Avenue in Greenwich Village, many of whom live on the street. Like *Down on their Luck (*1993), it offers a window into the complexity of the pathways into homelessness, the practises in which people engage in order to survive, the relationships and explanations of why moving on from homelessness is so challenging. A British ethnography by Butchinsky (2007) recounted the three years she spent with rough sleepers in Oxford and other participants that she described as 'part time homeless' (p.10), people who had found accommodation but were still involved in the routines of street life. This ethnography offered a glimpse into the lived experience of being homeless or recently ex-homeless in the UK, mirroring some of the experiences of the UK research participants in this study.

These ethnographic accounts of homelessness bring an understanding through exploring the individual's life circumstances against the back-drop of the macro-structural forces (Duneier, 2001), thus avoiding the 'distortion' criticism (Blasi, 1994; Snow et al., 1994). They consider homelessness within a broader context and the voices of the participants are heard. This supports Snow, Anderson and Koegel's (1994) argument that the 'views of the homeless must be elicited and their voices articulated' (p.470), which 'recaptures the humanity' (p.470) of the population being researched. This

principle of hearing and acknowledging the experience of participants who are homeless when conducting research is adopted for this study and explored in the methodology and methods chapter, where the personal accounts of the singers who are homeless, drive the study and the analysis.

3.4 Experiences of Homelessness

This section explores four specific experiences of homelessness that have been drawn from across the homeless literature and have been selected for their relevance to this study.

Social and relational aspects

The relational aspect of homelessness occurs frequently in the literature and seems to be one of the most prevailing experiences. This section explores this experience through three aspects: relationships with other people who are homeless, with family and former friends and with the public and society. The homeless literature proposes two narratives around homelessness and social interactions. The first argues that people experience loneliness and are socially isolated (Sanders and Brown, 2015), while the other focuses on the complexity of the relationships between people who are homeless (Somerville, 2013).

Research by the homeless charity Crisis, (Sanders and Brown, 2015), found that 61% of people who are homeless feel lonely; a figure three times higher than the national average. Loneliness can have a negative impact on wellbeing, being linked to depression, anxiety and low self-esteem (Rokach, 2005). Social exclusion is associated with homelessness and leads to the experience of existing on the 'outside' of society and a loss of self (Bell and Walsh, 2015). While Rokach (2005) argues that new relationships will be beneficial and support good life quality for people who are homeless, this group can experience 'interpersonal alienation' and there can be issues around feeling rejected. Thomas et al. (2012) has argued that forming

meaningful relationships is a critical factor in wellbeing for people who are homeless and linked to survival.

However, relationships formed between those in the homeless population are essential, complex and challenging. While people may be members of the same sub-culture, they are not a homogenous population, they may just share the same routines, daily patterns and behaviours (Snow and Anderson, 1993). In her research with street sleepers in Oxford, Butchinsky (2007) observed the negative impact of relationships saying they can 'volatile and often plagued by mistrust' (p.12), while Ravenhill's (2008) work recognised the importance of social connections and remarked on the 'intensity and strength of the networks and friendships' (p.161) Somerville (2013) sums up this dichotomy by describing relationships between people who experience homelessness as:

> supportive and threatening, risky and reassuring, uplifting and depressing and oppressive and liberating bring both joy and misery and hope and despair (p. 403).

Duneier (2001) took a broad view of the intimate relationships between those earning an informal living on a pavement in Greenwich Village. He recognised the support structures that were created and how the psychologically-able sellers supported those that are more vulnerable and would 'encourage responsible behaviour' (p.80). This mirrors Butchinsky's (2007) work in the UK, which found the street was a place where community could be fostered. In their research looking at wellbeing for people who are homeless, Thomas et al. (2012) also found this at day centres and hostels, noticing that they could be hubs for social interaction and here people created a sense of community and belonging.

Relationships within the homeless population can lead to supportive networks, but they can hold people back from moving into their own accommodation. Ravenhill (2008) observed that it was the intensity of the relationships that made it hard for a person to move out of a homeless culture and Bell and

Walsh (2015) recognised that the acceptance and companionship between residents in a homeless shelter led to them being reluctant to leave. Boswell (2010) confirms a growing concern that the success of re-housing a person relies on them maintaining social networks and 'isolation and loneliness have been identified as important factors that can lead to tenancy breakdown' (p.212). Forming social networks appear to be a critical factor for enduring homelessness, but also essential in maintaining a life beyond homelessness.

Former and current relationships with family and friends not within the homeless culture are also explored in the literature. It was widely believed that people who are homeless are cut off from their social networks with family, friends and old work colleagues (Baum and Burnes, 1993) and family related problems are a key contributor to some people becoming homeless (Snow and Anderson, 1993). However, Toro (2007) in his international review of homelessness found that many people are in contact with their family, but these relationships are often not positive experiences.

When looking at social aspects of the experience of homelessness, the interaction with wider society is essential to consider. Bevan (2007) gives some indication of the experience, by saying people who are homeless are 'unseen, passed-by, silent or silenced'. (p.74). McNaughton said that people experience being 'cast out', and no longer belonging to society, becoming a 'non-citizen' (Schmidt and Robaina, 2017). Research with street children in Rio in the 1990's (Diversi et al., 1999) gives some indication of the experience of this social exclusion:

> Many kids have said that even worse than being yelled at is not being acknowledged, not being answered or looked at when trying to make contact with someone (p.32).

Social exclusion is more profound than just being ignored on the street, it is about being denied the capacity to engage in society or hold the position as a citizen and leads to a lack of social capital (McNaughton, 2008). Lovisi et al.

(2007) who explored the routes into homeless for older people in Rio de Janeiro, described homelessness as being more about belonging nowhere than it is about having nowhere to sleep. This supports the (home)less definition of Robinson (2002), who proposes that having a home, is less about a building and more about relationships and a sense of belonging. When research participants who were homeless were asked about what enabled wellbeing, they said it is about making social connection to others and feeling normal and human (Thomas et al., 2012b).

Relationships between people who are homeless are complex. While on one level it is synonymous with loneliness and social isolation (Sanders and Brown, 2015), it is also apparent that social interactions between people who are homeless bring a support structure, which may compensate for the lack of family ties (Bates and Toro, 1999). These strong links though can lead to people remaining trapped in a homeless situation. Friendship and support that has been fostered through relationships with other people who are on the streets or living in hostels may not be easy to leave when someone is given a house. This has an impact on maintaining a tenancy and leaving a homeless situation. However, the choirs and singing groups may offer a healthy environment in which to form new relationships with other people who share a similar life experience but are seeking to make positive life changes. Connections are formed within a healthy supported environment and these ties can be transferred to life beyond homelessness. SO's model specifically supports the progression. Their drop-in groups run within a homeless service, but singers can transition to an explore community based group. As singers move into these more independent groups there are opportunities for the friendships to transfer as well, and for new relationships to be made with other people moving out of homelessness.

Issues of mental health and drug and alcohol use

The wellbeing and health of people who experience homelessness can be explored through the lens of mental health and the use of alcohol and drugs.

Research into this area is extensive, particularly by academics looking from a medical or health perspective (Lovisi et al., 2003; Metraux et al., 2004; Fiorati et al., 2016). This research focus mirrors McNaughton's sick-talk: that misuse of drugs and alcohol and deteriorating mental and physical health are a trigger for homelessness (Snow and Anderson, 1993; McNaughton, 2008).

Mental health issues are found to be above the national average for people who are homeless both in the UK (Homeless Link, 2014) and in Rio (Lovisi et al., 2003). Deteriorating mental health is not just a trigger for homelessness but also identified as a consequence of the condition (Homeless Link, 2014), but people who are homeless are generally poor at engaging with medical services (Fazel et al., 2008). However, it is interesting that mental health levels were found to decrease while people were residing in a hostel (Butchinsky, 2007).

Butchinsky's (2007) research with street sleepers revealed an interesting perspective on mental health diagnosis. Her participants reported that the label of mental illness is viewed as a weakness within their community and indicated a person seeking mental health support is 'surrendering their place in the wider society' (p.23). A diagnosis of mental health was felt to be demeaning and an indication you were unable to care for yourself. She also found that mental health levels increased while people were residing in a hostel.

Misuse of drugs and alcohol were prevalent for people who are homeless, and this risk behaviour has been described as edgework (McNaughton, 2008). However, the research indicates that using these substances support some key life functions: alleviating boredom and helping people to fall asleep (Butchinsky, 2007). They also enable emotional functions, leading to the user feeling less unhappy (Butchinsky, 2007). The research also indicates that they are used to relieve pain (Snow et al., 1994; Butchinsky, 2007). These relate to Diener, Oishi and Lucas's (2003) model of subjective wellbeing, that proposes positive mood as an indicator of life satisfaction.

Snow and Anderson (1993) observed that their research participants used these substances to avoid the misery of their lives, 'blotting out' the past and 'the moment' and escape. This led to a disconnection from the persons sense of self and an experience of losing oneself. An 'alternative reality' is created (Snow and Anderson, 1993), bringing a sense of having control over the environment (Somerville, 2013) and a sense of agency. It is interesting how many of these explanations for substance use relate to Ryff and Keyes (1995) wellbeing model, which identify autonomy and having a feeling of mastering your own environment as key indicators. The use of substances to block unpleasant thoughts, relates to the experience of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997), where mental distraction can lead to a sense of personal ease and greater control over a situation.

There was a clear social aspect of drugs and alcohol use in the literature (Seal, 2007) and in relation to the previous section on relationships, it is interesting that where strong social connections were made between people who are homeless, these are the same places where substance use increased. Seal (2007) found a higher use in hostels, while Thomas et al. (2012) found these were places for social interaction and belonging. Snow and Anderson (1993) also found that alcohol use went up the longer people lived on the street. Drug and alcohol use as a social activity should not be underestimated for this socially isolated population (Butchinsky, 2007). Uncovering why people use drugs and alcohol when they are homeless, links to some of the benefits of participating in singing groups. This research will go onto uncover how singing allows people who are homeless to 'lose oneself' and block unpleasant thoughts and experiences, while enabling positive emotions

Negotiating space

One of the challenges of experiencing homelessness concerns the right to occupy space and homelessness has been described as a 'struggle over territory' (Snow & Anderson, 1993, p.103). It has been associated with a loss of free movement (Heritage and Peacock, 2014; Schmidt and Robaina, 2017) which is especially evident around Olympic cities (Schmidt & Robaina, 2017), where 'undesirable' people are deterred and unwelcome (Kennelly and Watt, 2011). The struggle is also evident in relation to where homeless services are placed and what land or buildings the 'domiciled' are willing to concede for hostels and day centres (Snow & Anderson, 1993). Space then becomes tightly controlled (Somerville, 2013) and only 'marginal space', that of little value to non-homeless people may be conceded to the homeless (Snow and Anderson 1993). The implications for people who are homeless are that they have no place to just 'be' (Snow and Anderson,1993) or are treated as if they are 'out of place' as public space becomes sanitised (Kennelly and Watt, 2011). Schmidt & Robaina's (2017) found in Rio that authorities adopted a policy of removals to 'clean' people from the streets and keep neighbourhoods 'vagrant free'. Robaina (2011), in her work with people who are homeless in Rio found that adopting a mantle of invisibility was a strategy to negotiate space. The body then becomes indistinguishable from the landscape and disappears (Robaina, 2011) and movement and behaviour become undetected. This battle over space links to issues of safety, as being seen on the streets increases the vulnerability of people. Butchinsky (2007) found that UK street sleepers reported being fearful of attacks from the public and the police while occupying space on the street.

Public space is afforded with different values. For people who are homeless who eat, sleep, work and maybe defecate outside, the mundane space is transformed into a place with personal meaning. Private activities take place in public (McCarthy, 2013) under public scrutiny (Butchinsky, 2007), often not in line with dominant social rules of how the space should be used and so are seen as 'wrong' (Robaina, 2011). Butchinsky (2007) argues this view is

reflected back to the homeless people, making them feel degraded and further stigmatised. Evidence of the subtle territorial negotiations to claim space in order to make a living was observed through Duneier's (2001) street sellers and people who begged. The Administrative Code of the City of New York stated that street vendors could occupy no more than eight by three feet on the pavement. If a seller wanted more than one table and claim further space, they must be willing to pay a table watcher, because when tables were left unsupervised the police could remove and destroy all the contents and persons belongings. If large items were for sale and did not fit into the allotted area, they were sold from beyond the allocated space. These sales had to be conducted rapidly, before the police arrived and removed the item. For people who 'panhandle' or beg there is also a competition to claim territory (Butchinsky, 2007) and clear negotiation of rules. Duneier (2001) observed how four 'doormen' worked the local bank, dividing up a twenty-four hour shift. When a person arrived at the bank, one of the four men would open the door and greet the visitors and then expect a donation for their service. Here the space had a temporal element, the longer the time spent in the space, the greater the earning potential. The right to occupy space is a critical issue for people who experience homelessness and understanding the 'community spatial distinctions' (Snow and Anderson, 1993, p.103) is a matter of survival.

As there are limited public 'homeless' places that people are entitled to occupy, activities and groups that are specifically set up for people who are homeless, are critical in providing a space where people can just 'be'. Music groups that are set up which reflect the community music policy of hospitality (Higgins, 2012) become spaces where people are not only entitled to be, but where they are actively invited in and welcomed. The groups, then, can become spaces where people who are homeless not only have a right to exist, but they also become a place of safety (Higgins, 2012) where singers can explore alternative ways of being (Nordberg et al., 2018).

Stigma and Identity

Stigma is defined as a person who is disqualified from being fully socially accepted in society (Goffman, 1968) and reflects Gowan's sin-talk (2010), described earlier in the chapter, where a person is culpable and blamed for their own situation. There are two types of stigma, internalised and enacted (Davila et al., 2018). Internalised considers the negative self-belief a person carries about themselves. McNaughton (2008) reminds us that people who are homeless were once on the 'other side' and may still carry a negative view of people who are homeless, being fully 'aware of the stigma attached' (p.140). A person then who is homeless can carry an internal revulsion of their situation. The other is enacted stigma where a person is aware of the perceived discrimination of others. The literal perspective of homelessness explored earlier in this section, epitomised by 'aesthetically unappealing' or disruptive people on the streets, an image perpetuated by the media, may fuel the societal stigma of homelessness (Phelan et al., 1997). This is despite street sleepers only making up a small percentage of people who are homeless. Phelan and colleagues (1997) noted that non-homeless people distance themselves from people who are homeless and maintain that they are culpable for their own situation and need to be controlled and managed.

Stigma contributes to the homeless identity socially imposed by society and perpetuated by the press and this 'spoiled identity' (Goffman, 1968) prevents a person fully being accepted in society. It brings a pariah-like status (Snow and Anderson, 1993) and makes the person a 'non-citizen', existing on the margins of society (Schmidt and Robaina, 2017). The stigma leads to homeless people losing a sense of self and a research participant of McNaughton (2008) captured this when he said, 'it's as if you are nothing, a no-one' (p.148). McCarthy (2013) gives an overview of what is meant by a homeless identity and describes it as a socially constructed stereotype which is 'externally imposed' (p.55). It perpetuates a negative and over simplified image of vulnerability, victimhood, criminology and pathologies. A social identity such as this can be absorbed and performed having a negative impact

on a person's sense of themselves as they become a 'damaged self' (Magee, 2002). This is a concept borrowed from music and disabilities studies. A damaged self reduces all homeless people into a homogenous group of 'other', having a negative impact on wellbeing and social relationships. This projection is important in terms of interactions with the public and implications for receiving help and support from those working to alleviate homelessness (McCarthy, 2013). The stigmatisation of people who are homeless can be further exacerbated through the research process, where people are categorised as 'out of the ordinary' (Parsell, 2008) and seen as 'other', separate and different to the norm.

People who are homeless can explore their sense of self and accept or refute the social identity, by developing their own personal identity (Snow and Anderson, 1987, 1993). They construct this through engaging in 'identity talk'. Snow and Anderson observed their research participants used a technique called embracement, demonstrating their acceptance of their social homeless identity. Two examples that illustrate this point are from Duneier (2001), where a research participant spoke about his fame in the press as a 'tramp' and another who bragged about being an 'expert dumpster diver' (p.220). McNaughton (2008) found some of her participants fully embraced and accepted their homelessness, seeing it now as their 'normal' life. Embracing and internalising a homeless identity gave people some 'ontological security' over their world (McNaughton, 2008). A further type of identity talk was called distancing and involved disassociating from other homeless people and from the 'low status, negatively evaluated roles' (Snow and Anderson, 1993:216). This is illustrated through, research participant, Tony Jones in *Down on their Luck* (Snow and Anderson, 1993), who said, 'I'm not like the other guys that hang out at the Sally…because I'm different'. (p.215). These examples illustrate how social identities can be accepted or challenged and refuted.

The question of how a person who is homeless can address and reconcile their imposed homeless identity, find self-worth and give meaning to their lives

was a concern for two primary American ethnographies (Snow and Anderson, 1993; Duneier, 2001) and is an issue that is relevant to this study. Snow and Anderson argued that people can 'salvage the self', despite being immersed in an environment that was hostile to self-worth. Gans (1972), in the 1970s argued that people who lack political and cultural power, like those who have experienced homeless, are unable to move on from their socially imposed stereotype, but this is challenged when looking at how spoiled identities can be rejected through music. The music psychologists Macdonald, Hargreaves and Miell (2017) argue that personal identities are not fixed but can shift and evolve when making music with others. One question that arises for this study is whether the singers in the choirs and groups can reject the socially imposed stigma of homelessness and reconstruct an identity based on their engagement in music and performing.

Summary

Homelessness is multi-dimensional (Somerville, 2013), and an issue that is more than about safe housing. It has been described as a condition that reflects a lack of meaningful social relationships, being excluded from society and a lack of belonging. It also implies a lack of control or mastery over life. A deeper understanding of homelessness minimises further stigma and blame on the individual and helps inform the services that support people who are experiencing homelessness. If 'home' is synonymous with positive relationships and environmental mastery, then choirs and singing groups set up for people who are homeless may create places that help foster this environment (Ruud, 1997). Four pervading issues associated with the experience of homelessness have been raised in this section: complex relationships, substance misuse and mental illness, concerns around space and safety and finally stigma and identity. Each issue informs this research and understanding singing groups that have been set up for this population. The previous chapter has proposed that these groups bring opportunities for healthy and meaningful social interactions (Bailey and Davidson, 2003, 2005;

Boal-Palheiros, 2017; Nordberg et al., 2018), and participating can foster feelings of wellbeing (Bailey and Davidson, 2001). The groups can be a hospitable and safe space (Higgins, 2012; Boal-Palheiros, 2017), where people who are homeless have a right to exist. They may offer a way to address some of the key damaging aspects of homelessness and challenge the stigma associated with a homeless identity. Singing groups, then, are not just a short term 'removal' (DeNora, 2015) from homelessness, but an environment where some of the core issues of homelessness can be addressed.

3.5 Research Questions

While the number of new choirs and community singing opportunities in UK have expanded and the research examining the relationship between singing and wellbeing has grown, there is limited research to date on groups set up for singers who have experienced homelessness. The numbers of people affected by homeless in the UK and Rio has risen over the last decade and the damaging impact on quality of life has been explored. My motivation for conducting this research, emerged from my practice as a community musician and wanting to understand the experience of being a group member. I also wanted to explore how the groups are perceived by the group leaders, support staff and those who set them up, leading to a more comprehensive understanding. I was also interested in exploring how the impact of being in these groups contributes to our understanding of wellbeing and community choirs. A qualitative phenomenological approach was adopted to gather personal nuanced accounts of those involved in the groups.

The over-arching questions that drive this research are:

- How do people who have experienced homelessness understand and give meaning to the experience of group singing participation?

- What do the accounts of staff who run or support the groups and those who set them up, contribute to our understanding of these groups?

- In what ways can homeless singing groups be explored through adopting a phenomenological approach, that draws on music psychology with a sociological lens.

Chapter 4 Methodology and Methods

This chapter considers the methods adopted to conduct the research and explores the considerations of researching with vulnerable participants. It then examines my ontological and epistemological positioning, before exploring the principles behind a phenomenological qualitative approach. The methods used to conduct this research are then outlined, detailing the research design, issues of reflexivity and the ethical framework. The final section then summarises how the data was collected and analysed.

Methodology

4.1 Researching with Participants with Experience of Homelessness

> 'Researching homelessness is not for those who would avoid controversy' (Shlay and Rossi, 1992, p.130)

The lack of a home is synonymous with the absence of security, stability and personal legitimacy (Stebbing, 2017) and where privacy is often denied (York Research, 2010). People who have experienced homelessness may have experienced violence, trauma and abuse and are routinely marginalized and exploited (York Research, 2010). All this is pertinent in guiding the choice of methodology for these two studies. A 'distrust of mainstream procedures' (Bailey and Davidson, 2003, p.21) and a fear of authority (Willig, 2013) requires an approach that is highly humanistic, and ethical, fosters a sense of trust, ensures safety and respects personal dignity (Freire, 2000; Eubanks, 2009; Bergold and Thomas, 2012a). Having a low socio-economic status can have a negative impact on a person's sense of agency and empowerment, (Ryff et al., 1999), so care must be taken for vulnerable participants to exert some control over their involvement in the research (Bailey and Davidson, 2002). Paulo Freire's (2000) seminal pedagogy, working 'with not for' his oppressed learners in Brazil, is an approach that is useful when considering

this research. He argued that people who are disadvantaged should not be 'acted upon' and treated like objects. Bergold and Thomas (2012) recognised this approach saying that research with marginalised communities is usually 'about' and seldom 'with' people. The research should seek to empower participants, as people who are disadvantaged can feel disenfranchised and distrusting of their own abilities (Freire, 2000). These considerations influence the theoretical framework for this research and drive the methodology.

4.2 Qualitative Approach

A qualitative method is adopted for this research. This approach can allow the voices of those who have experienced homelessness to be heard and for people to play a crucial role in investigating their own world (Eubanks, 2009). Fine (2008) said that those who have been the most excluded and oppressed in society carry a 'wisdom' that should not be ignored but acknowledged and utilized. Data should be drawn from the everyday lived experiences of people who have experienced poverty (Bergold and Thomas, 2012) and a qualitative approach allows participants to be the experts of their own experience (Freire, 2000). The approach should not impose my preconceptions about the experience of being involved in singing groups on the interviewees and enable the research process to be exploratory, reflecting the nature of the research questions. DeNora (2015) questions what we can learn from quantitative data collection methods, where questionaries' may trivialise the lived experience and 'risk over-simplifying complex phenomena' (p.140). Qualitative methods are interested in trying to gain a rich insight into human behaviour (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). They consider the quality and texture of an experience (Willig, 2013), exploring the motivations, insight, thoughts and opinions of participants and the meaning they attribute to an experience. They seek to understand how people make sense of their world. A qualitative method also enables participants to take some control of the research process by directing the conversation during the semi-structured interview (Bailey and Davidson, 2002). This method can bring agency and empowerment to interviewees (Ryff

et al., 1999) while capturing rich and nuanced personal accounts. Mason explains, (2002, p.1):

> Through qualitative research we can explore a wide array of dimensions of the social world, including the texture and weave of everyday life, the understandings, experiences and imaginings of our research participants

A quantitative approach, however, was adopted by Cronley et al., (2018) with their research conducted with the Dallas Street Choir, where the psychosocial characteristics of the singers in a homeless choir were investigated. This suited their interest in quantifying those who attended the choir and creating singing profiles around attendance, housing status, race and levels of vulnerability. However, the other six research studies with homeless choirs were qualitative and like this study, looked to understanding the subtleties of the singing group experience.

4.3 Epistemological and Ontological Positioning

The theoretical framework driving any research acknowledges the researcher's 'world view' (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p.15) and their opinions on how knowledge is produced, reflecting their core values. The ontological and epistemological position for this research is a constructivist paradigm, with its relativist approach. It reflects my view as a researcher, that there are multiple versions of reality and many perspectives can lead to a deep understanding of a phenomena (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). This is the relativist approach, which argues that truth is context bound and dependant on the meaning that individuals give to an experience, which must be interpreted to bring a deeper understanding. It challenges the positivist positioning of research being a 'one-way mirror' (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 107), which searches for an 'absolute' objective truth and leads to findings that can be verified and replicated. In light of the research questions driving this study, positivism could not accommodate the voices and experiences of participants. Bailey and Davidson (2003) in

their research with homeless choirs in Canada, actively seeking to avoid their research participants becoming ‘illusory beings from mathematical averages’ (p. 21). This is especially pertinent when the research encourages the participants who are homeless to acknowledge that they are the experts of their own experience.

Constructivism drives this research in three aspects: it acknowledges the influence of the researcher in the process; it focuses on values within the research and it supports the collaboration between participants and researcher in generating new knowledge. Constructivism acknowledges that the researcher, described as the ‘passionate participant’ (Guba and Lincoln, 1994 p.114), inevitably impacts the research and their values and experience shape the research, influencing the research questions and methodology. The challenges of this insider/outside position and reflexivity will be explored further in the chapter. Guba and Lincoln (1994) also believe the constructivist researcher must ‘incorporate the values of altruism and empowerment in their work’ (p.114) and adopt the qualities of ‘trustworthiness’ and ‘authenticity’ (p.112), a nod to the humanistic and ethical approach adopted in these studies. The values of the researcher must be disclosed and are central in guiding the studies. Epistemologically, constructivists maintain that reality needs to be interpreted to understand the meaning of an experience and that knowledge is created in partnership with participants and the researcher, with both ‘constructions’ given equal consideration.

The relativist constructivist approach adopted for this study reflects my understanding of what constitutes reality and how knowledge is gathered. This is demonstrated in the qualitative phenomenological research method used for this study and has influenced my decision to collect data through semi-structured interviews.

4.4 Phenomenology

Phenomenology is the study of the lived conscious experience of people. It attempts to uncover reality by exploring how we make sense of or understand an experience and asking what it is like to be in the world (van Manen, 2017). It uncovers individual experiences of reality within different contexts. The philosopher Husserl, the founder of phenomenological inquiry, sought to examine human experience by separating routine taken for granted activities, known as the 'lifeworld', (Smith et al. 2009), from how that activity is experienced in a person's consciousness. He said:

> Through reflection, instead of grasping simply the matter straight-out – the values, goals and instrumentalities – we grasp the corresponding subjective experience in which we become 'conscious' of them, in which (in the broadest sense) they appear
> (Husserl, 1927, as cited in Smith et al., 2009, p.12-13)

The approach considers what it means to be human through capturing what participants remembered, observed, and felt, and drawing out meaning from their interpretation of the social and personal experience. A central pillar of Husserl's phenomenology is 'intentionality', (Smith et al., 2009) a key element of experience and how people make decisions. It links the processes that occur in our consciousness with the object itself, so that we do not just see or think or remember something without it being in relation to that object. 'Bracketing' was a process that Husserl proposed to move past the 'lifeworld' and get to the 'core of the subjective experience' (Smith et al., 2009, p.13). He suggested this could be done through 'reduction', which enabled people to move away from pre-conceived ideas about a phenomenon back to the essential element of the experience. Through adopting a phenomenological inquiry, the ordinary then takes on an extraordinary significance.

The seminal studies by Bailey and Davidson (2002, 2003, 2005) with choirs for singers who have experiences homelessness in Canada have all adopted theoretical phenomenological inquiry. In the 2002 paper they stated:

> It was considered that a phenomenological approach…would be the most appropriate format for this investigation…because of the sensitive and marginalized nature of the homeless condition, it was considered important to engage the choristers in such a way that they would regard themselves as an integral part of the process rather than merely objects of investigation (p.231).

A phenomenological perspective matches the constructivist paradigm adopted for this research and informs the collection of data and analysis process.

This research was supported by an ethnographic element, where I became immersed in the life-world of homeless singing groups by attending sessions and performances. Through watching, listening and then asking relevant questions, ethnography allows the social meaning, actions, beliefs and values of a group to be understood (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). This ethnographic awareness closes the gap between myself as the researcher and participants, whilst creating space for those who are disadvantaged to be seen and their voices to be heard (Duckworth, 2014). It is an approach adopted by key homeless researchers (Snow and Anderson, 1993; Duneier, 2001; Butchinsky, 2007), who witness and give meaning to intimate experiences of their research participants.

Methods

4.5 Research Design

The research involved two separate studies exploring choirs and singing groups set up for people who have experienced homelessness. The main part of the study involved visiting groups in the UK, observing rehearsals and performances and inviting singers and staff to be interviewed. The Rio part of study was conducted while I was a delegate of With One Voice's cultural exchange. I observed the choirs performing across the city as part of an arts and homeless 'occupation' and attended some rehearsals.

Sampling

To meet the research criteria, groups were approached to be part of the research if they met three criteria: the group had been set up for people who had experienced homelessness, it was based in the community and involved singing. Twelve groups in the UK and six in Rio agreed to be involved in the research. I was given permission to observe the sessions, to join in the singing, to introduce myself to singers and staff and to invite people to be interviewed for the research. I also attended group performances. Table 2 gives the names and details of each of the groups involved in the research.

Group Name	Location (No's of groups)	Group Type	Membership criteria	Number of participants	Concert attended
With One Voice	Rio de Janeiro (6)	Choir	Exclusively for people who have experienced homelessness	30	Yes
Streetwise Opera	Manchester (2) London (2) Middlesbrough (2) Gateshead (1)	Opera Workshop	Exclusively for people who have experienced homelessness	12 &19 13 & 18 25 &16 23	Yes No Yes Yes
Choir With no Name	London (1) Birmingham (1)	Choir	Exclusively for people who have experienced homelessness	35 48	No Yes
Lodging House Mission Choir	Glasgow (1)	Choir	Based in a homeless day centre. Choir members are predominantly users of the centre	11	Yes
Inspire Choir	Edinburgh (1)	Choir	A community-based choir open to all participants involved in the Inspire projects. These include singers who have experience of homelessness, social isolation and mental health issues.	22	Yes
Grassmarket Community Project Choir	Edinburgh (1)	Choir	A members-only choir in a community project that supports people who are socially isolated and vulnerable and includes people who have experienced homelessness.	16	Yes

Table 2. Groups and Organisations Involved in the Research

I visited eighteen different groups across eight cities and towns as part of the research. The numbers in brackets after each location in the box indicates how number of groups in each city or town that involved in the research. For the study I attended fourteen performances. Some of the groups were exclusively for those who had experienced homelessness, one was based in a homeless day centre and set up for users of the centre although people from outside the centre attended the choir. Two were community-based groups set up for a range of vulnerable singers. The size of the groups varied from eleven singers at Lodging House Mission Choir to forty eight at the CWNN Birmingham group. I recorded the numbers of singers who attended one rehearsal, but this is not representative of the overall numbers of people who would identify as members of that group, as attendance can be sporadic. The figure also does not capture the flow of singers and arriving and leaving during each session.

Recruitment

At the start of the process I contacted Matt Peacock, who had set up SO and With One Voice, to discuss my research. I already had a professional relationship with him through SO's support of Scottish Opera during their three year partnership with the Lodging House Mission. We had remained in contact since that time as he was an Edinburgh University alumnus and made regular visits to Scotland. I invited him to be interviewed for the research and he agreed. He also introduced me to Marie Benton, the founder of CWNN, who also agreed to be interviewed. Both were very supportive of the research and gave permission for me to attend groups and invite their members and staff to be interviewed. When visiting the workshops and rehearsals I made an open invitation to group members, group leaders and support staff to contribute to the research and be interviewed. The invitation was also extended to a former group member, and a non-member who attended a homeless day centre but had elected not to join their choir. Singers were made aware that the criteria for being involved in the research was having experienced homelessness, but

no distinction was made between being formally homeless, currently homeless or indeed the duration of the period of homelessness.

Having worked in the field of choirs and homelessness in the Scotland for seven years, I already had professional relationships with other people working in this area as well as connections with singers. This enabled me to recruit singers and staff in Scotland. My experience and understanding of this world helped me to gain access to groups in England and be accepted by singers and staff. I always introduced myself to new groups as a choir leader and a researcher. I sensed that people accepted me and embraced my research as they felt I understood this world and would be sympathetic to their work and not interfere with the running of the groups. One interviewee from a group in Manchester, told me he wanted to be involved in my research because he had heard me talk about a concert where he had performed. When I initially visited groups at their rehearsals, I was given the opportunity to speak to the singers and staff, tell them about my research and invite anyone to discuss the research in more detail. As I had set up and led both the Lodging House Mission Choir and Gassmarket Community Choir, I already knew the singers and staff and I only invited one person from each group to be involved in the research. I was keen that my participants would come from a broad spectrum of groups and that I would hear accounts from groups where I had not been previously involved. I personally invited William, an ex-member of a homeless choir and Jim a non-member to be involved.

With One Voice and Matt Peacock, supported my research in Rio and helped me contact their choir leader, Ricardo Brando Vasconcellas, known as Rico, before I arrived. I had an opportunity to tell him about my research via a translated e-mail and invite him and his choir members to be involved. On arrival in Rio, Rico introduced me to singers, Joao and Elizabete who were interested in the research and wanted to be involved. Both had experience of speaking to the press about being in the choir. Going to rehearsals and performances across Rio brought opportunities to invite others to be involved.

Rico, the choir leader was keen to be interviewed and also introduced me another choir leader called Thiago, who ran a choir at the Rio Cathedral.

When a participant indicated interest in being involved, I followed up with an informal conversation to tell them more about the process and answer any questions. If they were keen to continue, they were given an information sheet to read, or where necessary, the sheet was read aloud to them, to ensure they were fully aware of what participating in research involved and the implications. Research participants were then asked to complete and sign a consent form. The information sheet and consent form were available in English for the UK study (Appendix 1). For the Rio study, the information sheet and consent form were available in Portuguese (Appendix 2). The translators took care to ensure that any questions or concerns about the research were directed back to me. Interviews were not conducted until I was confident that the information sheet and consent form were understood and signed.

Twenty-seven participants agreed to be interviewed for this research and Table 3 and Table 4 provides more information about the interviewees.

Group location	Name/ 'Pseudonym'	Gender	Group/ organisation	Role in the group	Previous relationship with researcher
Manchester	Mark	Male	Streetwise Opera	Member	No
	Matt	Male	Streetwise Opera	Member	No
	Danny	Male	Streetwise Opera	Member	No
	'Bob'	Female	Streetwise Opera	Member	No
	Andy	Male	Streetwise Opera	Member	No
Middlesbrough	'Darine'	Female	Streetwise Opera	Member	No
	Ree	Female	Streetwise Opera	Regional Co-ordinator	No
	Charlie	Male	Streetwise Opera	Support Worker	No
Newcastle	Chris	Male	Streetwise Opera	Member	No
	Ange	Female	Streetwise Opera	Member	No
London	Matt	Male	Streetwise Opera	Organisation founder	Professional colleague
	Marie	Female	Choir With no Name	Organisation founder	No
	'King'	Male	Choir With no Name	Member	No
	Clair	Female	Choir With no Name	Member	No
Birmingham	Pete	Male	Choir With no Name	Choir Leader	Professional colleague
Edinburgh	Benson	Male	Grassmarket Community Project Choir	Member	Yes
	'Anne'	Female	Inspire Choir	Member	No
Glasgow	Celine	Female	Lodging House Mission Choir	Choir Leader	Professional colleague
	William	Male	Lodging House Mission Choir	Former Member	Yes
	Jim	Male	None	Non-member	No

Table 3. Research Participants From the UK

Group Location	Name/ 'Pseudonym'	Gender	Group/organisation	Role in the group	Previous relationship with researcher
Rio de Janeiro	Elizabete	Female	With One Voice	Group Member	No
	Joao	Male	With One Voice	Group Member	No
	Nery	Male	With One Voice	Group Member	No
	Carlos	Male	With One Voice	Group Member	No
	Paulo	Male	With One Voice	Group Member	No
	Rico	Male	With One Voice	Choir Leader	No
	Thiago	Male	With One Voice	Choir Leader	No

Table 4. Research Participants from Rio

4.6 Researcher Position and Reflexivity

For any researcher to adopt a personal and epistemological reflexive position whilst conducting research, requires an honest, painful and in-depth analysis of prejudices, biases and influences. This process is particularly important when a researcher investigates a phenomenon that is very familiar to them and the motivation for the research could be challenged for lacking impartiality. As Chapter 1 has outlined, I have worked as a choir leader for singers who have experienced homelessness since 2010 and decided to conduct this study in response to the positive experiences observed and reported by the singers and staff associated with the choirs. Remaining objective and distancing myself from my pre-suppositions about how these groups might be experienced is problematic (Finlay, 2003). While Husserl's theory of 'bracketing' pre-conceived conceptions (Smith et al., 2009) is an interesting idea, it is not possible to fully disengage from beliefs and perceptions after being immersed and working in a cultural phenomenon. However, a researcher can actively reflect on the influences and held beliefs, leading to a sense of distance from the data and a deeper self- awareness.

The idea of the insider / outsider position often over-simplifies the complexity of the place held by the researcher (Eubanks, 2009), giving the impression that groups are 'distinct and static' (p.117). In the environment of singing groups for people who have experienced homelessness I am in one sense an insider; I understand the rules and codes and can enter a group and freely converse with singers and leaders, leading to feelings of being 'accepted and legitimate' (Finlay, 2003, p.111). Yet my position is complex as I am also an outsider; I bring no understanding of the experience of homelessness and must recognise my bias as a middleclass British woman. These positions inevitably influence how I observe the groups and analyse the phenomena. Conducting research in Rio, was one way to address an insider/outsider issue. The UK was a familiar context, where I experienced more of the 'insider' position having worked with two choirs in Scotland for the last nine years. However,

through conducting a study in Rio, I anticipated I would feel more like an 'outsider', not knowing the rules, language and culture. Some degree of distance and objectivity could be achieved, thus helping challenge my assumed knowledge about the phenomena.

A further issue around reflexivity is shifting to the new role of a researcher. Duckworth (2014) explores the complexity of researching a field that is familiar, where access to participants may be more open, but negotiating the transition from choir leader to researcher and then holding that position is challenging. The two positions brought epistemological tension for me in this study. This was particularly evident with two singers who had been members of choirs that I had set up and run. On the one hand, as their ex-choir leader, I saw myself in a supporting role, yet as a researcher my aim was to probe and explore complexities and difficulties within the choir.

The influence of the researcher on the participant may impact the findings (Gentles et al., 2014) and lead to overly positive data. I anticipated that the singers who I interviewed about their experiences in a choir that I had led may be an eager to please me and give overly positive answers that they perhaps felt I expected. Drawing on groups from across the UK helped to minimise this as did the study in Rio. Another influence that may have impacted the data, was that many singers in this research had experience of speaking to the press or being involved in collating evidence for funding applications. In both these contexts, positive life transforming accounts were encouraged.

Adhering to reflexivity throughout the research process leads to findings that are transparent and trustworthy (Gentles et al., 2014) which helps to 'neutralise' the influence of the researcher. During this study some specific steps were taken to demonstrate a commitment to reflexivity. These are outlined in Table 5.

Researcher Discomfort	Shifting from the comfortable role of choir leader/ insider to researcher/outsider, led to feelings of discomfort which were initially minimised by being overly friendly and positive whilst attending the groups. Through the course of the research process I learnt to sit with the discomfort and see the distance as an advantage.
Interview technique	I felt my interview technique in Rio was overly friendly and too conversational. This seemed to prevent the direction of the interview being truly directed by the participant. This style also meant that the interview sometimes focused on my opinions of the choir. When conducting the next round of interviews in the UK, I then adopted a more distant persona. This new approach caused problems too as I felt I had demonstrated a lack of empathy towards one participant who had chronic mental health issues and had become paranoid during the interview after talking about benefit fraud. I also needed a technique to shift the mood when some personal information had been disclosed and I felt the interviewee had finished what they wanted to share. To address these reflexive concerns, I drew on some prepared phrases: • Thank you for sharing that with me and being so honest, it is very much appreciated. • Do you feel able to carry on with the interview? • Can I bring you back to thinking about your singing group?
Interview Questions	The data from Rio produced overly positive findings about the choir experience. This led to new question being introduced during the UK interviews asking if there were times the singer had thought about leaving the group or if there had been times when they wanted to leave.
Interviewing non-choir participant	To achieve a more balanced picture of the choir experience, a final interview with a member of a homeless centre was conducted. He was not a choir member but was in a day centre where there was an option to join.

Table 5. Evidence of On-Going Reflexive Practice

4.7 Ethical Considerations

The importance of adhering to an ethical approach when conducting research with vulnerable participants has already been explored in this chapter. Ethical approval for this research was granted by Edinburgh College of Art at Edinburgh University (Appendix 3) at the start of the study. A commitment to ethics must extend beyond applying for and receiving consent and merely complying with the research institution's regulation body. Researching with vulnerable participants with lived experience of homelessness requires an approach that is humanistic, ensuring safety and dignity of all involved; this is an on-going process, requiring a commitment to being 'ethically attuned throughout' (Willig, 2013. p.26). The ethical framework for this study focused on four key areas: issues around consent (Asfour, 2004); personal information storage; the researcher to 'act with integrity'; respecting and valuing the participants (National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement, 2012, p.6) and questions of privacy and anonymity and research legacy.

Consent

Guidelines for conducting research with people with lived experience of homelessness place great emphasis on consent, which must 'honestly and comprehensively' (Asfour, 2004) inform the participants about the research process and personal implications of being involved. All reasonable measures were put in place to ensure the participants gave free and informed consent. Vulnerable participants were approached via a group leader or member of support staff. This was to ensure that there was a person who the singers trusted that could support participants in deciding whether to be involved in the research. Time was then spent over each section of the consent form (Appendix 1 and 2). Once I felt confident that the information sheet and consent forms had been fully understood, the interview took place. One question on the form asked about whether the interviewee wished to remain anonymous or use their real name. This question was revisited after the interview. One choir member in Rio agreed to be involved in the research but did not turn up for the interview.

Conducting a study in Rio in an unknown language and working through a translator brought up inevitable ethical questions around consent and whether the participants truly were aware of the implications of participating in the research. Every attempt was made to ensure the participants with experience of homelessness understood the implications of being involved, what research in the UK involved and how the findings would be disseminated. Many participants asked for copies of any published papers. My paper that was published in 2018 from the study in Rio was translated in Portuguese and copies were given to all the research participants via the choir leader, Rico.

Storage

All personal information was stored in a locked cabinet in the Institute for Music in Human and Social Development office in the Music Department at Edinburgh University. Interview recordings and transcripts were stored securely (Focus Ireland, 2011) in the same cabinet and on a password protected computer.

Researcher Integrity

The research adhered to the principles of mutual respect, equality and inclusion. It was an ethical decision that every participant who met the research criteria and indicated they wanted to be involved was subsequently interviewed. In Manchester that meant returning at a later date to accommodate the interviewee's availability. All participants with experience of homelessness had their travel costs reimbursed, with UK participants also given a supermarket voucher for £10 and Rio participants were given 20 R$ (£4). This was to acknowledge the time given for the interview and to demonstrate the value of the contribution. All participants were made aware that their involvement was voluntary, and they could withdraw at any time. Particularly participants with lived experience of homelessness were continually reminded about this throughout the research process and the interview. Each interviewee was also made aware that they were not obliged to answer all the questions.

Privacy and Anonymity

The research was underpinned by a 'with' and not 'about' approach (Bergold and Thomas, 2012) and to this end, interviewees chose whether to remain anonymous, select their own pseudonym or use their real names. Guidelines around conducting research with people experiencing homelessness (Asfour, 2004; York Research, 2010; Focus Ireland, 2011) makes it very clear that participants must remain anonymous throughout the process, and any information in the interview that might identify them must be removed. However, the assumption that blanket anonymity is protecting participants is challenged by Moore (2012), who questions this paternalistic position. Using a feminist ethic of care approach, participants were given the opportunity to own and author their own stories and insights about the choir. This controversial issue is also addressed by the British Educational Research Association (British Educational Research Association, 2011), who argued that while 'the confidential and anonymous treatment of participants' data is considered the norm' (p.7), people involved in any research or subsequent publications, had a right to choose to be identified.

Participants from Rio and the UK also had an option for their interviews to be placed in a community archive in the UK, raising interesting questions around who the stories/ data belongs to. All twenty-seven interviewees opted for their transcripts to be made available in an archive. The choir members in particularly were passionate that their experiences of homelessness and singing experiences live on beyond the research and be heard and publicly available. Twenty three interviewees opted for their real names to be used four singers wanted to remain anonymous, with two choosing their own pseudonyms. All agreed for their images to be used publicly.

4.8 Data Collection

Observational field notes were made after each session and performance, helping to contextualise the main data source which was twenty seven semi-

structured interviews. The interview was adopted as the primary data collection technique, in line with the constructivist phenomenological approach of the study. Open ended questions were used to trigger thoughts and reflections related to the research questions (Willig, 2013), whilst creating space for the interviewee to create new understandings of a phenomenon. The interview technique is not seeking to 'excavate facts' (Mason, 2002:64) but through a process of co-production between interviewer and interviewee, experiences and memories are 'constructed' (Mason, 2002. p.64). A key skill for the interviewer then, is to create an environment and context to maximise the creation of this 'situated knowledge' (Haraway, 1988).

The interviews were conducted with each of the participants in a single sitting. They took approximately one hour and fifteen minutes in the UK, although the longest was an hour and three quarters. The Rio interviews lasted between forty five minutes and an hour, which included time to translate the interview questions and answers. The length of the interview was directed by the interviewee and their interest and attention. The Rio interviews were considerably shorter than those conducted in the UK and generated less data.

An organisational policy of SO required that their performers always had a member of support staff known to the participant available during the interview. This was adhered to but impacted the recordings. Finding a quiet space to conduct an interview in a day centre where support staff were present was a challenge, and there were interruptions from others using the building. In Middlesbrough and Newcastle where a day centre venue was not available, a member of support staff from Streetwise was paid by the researcher to be present during the interview. In Middlesbrough this had no impact on the interview, but in Newcastle the support worker sat very close to the interview and occasionally the answers the participants gave were intended to draw the support worker into the conversation. The two members of staff from SO from Middlesbrough who agreed to be interviewed were paid for their time, in line with the organisations policy.

The interviews with members in Rio were conducted through two paid interpreters that I met during the cultural exchange organised by With One Voice, whilst in Rio. We had a brief conversation about what format the interviews would follow and I interviewed them both about their impressions and position on choirs for people who have experienced homeless.

All the interviews followed a very loose and exploratory line of questioning (Willig, 2013) and were responsive to what the interviewee felt was important from their lived experience. The interview agenda inquired about the groups from the member's perspective, and asked questions about rehearsals, the other people in the group, the choir leader and the skills and qualities and about performances. Members were asked to discuss their experiences of homelessness, if they felt comfortable. The group staff and founders were asked about the groups from their perspectives with a similar line of questioning to the members. They were also asked about their individual career path that led them to this work. An interview agenda was created for the interviews (Appendix 4). The interviews were recorded onto two devices, a Zoom H4 and a mobile phone. They were immediately uploaded onto a password protected computer and deleted from the device.

4.9 Analysis

Transcription

The twenty-seven interviews were transcribed verbatim following criteria laid out by MacDonald and Miell (2002) and adapted to suit this research. Table 6 gives an example of the transcription key used.

Transcription Key

- S: Shelly
- F: Fred
- (.) denotes a pause of more than 1 second
- Emphasis in original speech is indicated by *italics*
- Where Fred stutters over a phrase or repeats words, these are underlined and the repetitions not transcribed.
- When the start of a word is spoken for example ‘s’ when the speaker planned to say ‘said’ but then stopped before completing the word, the ‘s’ is included in the transcript.
- Where words are mumbled or unclear this is indicated by (unclear)
- Where necessary, explanations of material are included within square brackets [ ] eg. [A member of staff at the centre now enters the room]
- Material which could not be transcribed is written within parentheses ( ) eg. (laughs, coughs).

Table 6. Research Transcription Key.

The original aim was to conduct around twenty interviews, but in line with my ethical framework, I interviewed every person with lived experience of homelessness who approached me and asked to be part of the study. I also decided at the end of the data collection process to include a person with lived experience of homelessness who had not joined a choir. Due to time restrictions I used a professional transcriber for four of the interviews, who had been recommended by another academic in the Institute for Music in Human and Social Development. She signed a confidentiality agreement, which involved not sharing the interview with anyone and destroying the data once the job was completed.

Thematic Analysis

Analysing the twenty-seven interviews involved a process of interpretation, which requires deep engagement with the transcripts to construct meaning. Willig (2013), describes analysis as bringing ‘to light aspects or dimensions of

the object which are not immediately obvious, but which help us understand better what it may be about' (p.39-40). Although other forms of analysis and methodology were considered, thematic analysis was deemed to be a suitable fit for this research, with its focus on identifying patterns of meaning to bring a rich account of a phenomena. It has been criticised as being an 'anything goes' approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.78), as it sits independently of any theoretical framework or epistemological position. However, accessibility and flexibility are its strength and it is supported by a step by step guide, which brings accountability and rigour to the analytical process (Braun and Clarke, 2006). It also supports a large data set, which was a key feature of this research.

The full transcriptions were printed on paper and the analysis followed a five step process for each interview.

1. For the first step, I was immersed in and became familiar with the transcriptions. This required active reading and reflexively noting points of interest and triggered emotions and experiences. These notes were added to the transcription in column 1 (Clarke and Braun, 2006).
2. The next phase involved coding: examining the data line by line and identifying and labelling identified units of meaning (Willig, 2013). These were noted on the transcription sheet in column 2.
3. The next stage involved deeper analysis with the codes being clustered into broad themes.
4. In stage four the themes were refined, reviewed and cross-checked against the coded extracts. They were defined and drawn together to illustrate the research story and give meaning to the data.
5. Finally the themes were discussed with colleagues and supervisors.

Analysis of UK data

The nineteen interviews from the UK led to three different groups of codes. The staff interviews were coded together and generated 201 codes. The group

members generated 245 codes and Jim generated 48 codes. (Appendix 5). Broad themes were initially constructed from the codes and through a process of discussion, writing and distilling, four themes emerged from data. These will be explored in turn, in Chapters 5 6, 7 and 8.

Analysis of Rio data

The seven interviews from Rio were coded together and generated 195 codes (Appendix 6). Broad themes were initially constructed from the codes and through a process of discussion, writing and distilling, four themes emerged from the data, which will be explored in Chapter 9.

4.10 Reliability and Reflections

The codes were discussed with my research supervisors Dr. Moore and Prof. MacDonald and this process of triangulation helped refine them and ensure reliability.

Reflecting on the Rio part of the study, I feel the data would have been stronger if I had entered the process with more experience of working through an interpreter. On reflection, I should have set out very clear instructions to both the interviewee and the translator that I was expecting each phrase to be translated, as spoken by the interviewee and in the first person. The translations were lengthy paraphrased blocks often in the third person. From the recording I have observed that the interviewee spoke for much longer than the translation. By paraphrasing the interviewee's answers in lengthy sections, there was less opportunity to respond to the nuanced detail in each answer. Negotiating this three-way relationship was a complex process. The subject matter was often very personal, and at times the interviewees were highly animated and passionate. I recognise that it might have been inappropriate and detrimental to the flow of the story for the translator to interrupt the interview to translate.

There are further reflections that may help explain why the experiences from the Rio choir member interviewees were predominantly positive. The interpreters sometimes re-phrased the question if it appeared the interviewee had not understood and they also had conversations in Brazilian, that were not translated. I believe the interpreter was attempting to help 'give' me the answers they believed I was expecting. Another issue was that some of the singers had given many interviews during the cultural Olympiad to the press where the positive impact of participating was encouraged. This experience may have coloured the accounts that the singers produced. Finally, due the time required for translation, the interviews were inevitably shorter in Rio and produced less in-depth accounts. It was, however, felt that conducting interviews for any longer than an hour would be detrimental to the wellbeing of choir members.

Summary

Chapter 4 has outlined the methodology that underpins this research and the adoption of a qualitative phenomenological approach. This supports a environment that is empowering for participants who are vulnerable and ensures their voices are heard and they have some control over the direction of the research. The chapter has given a detailed description of the methods used for this study. Twenty seven semi-structured interviews were conducted, and field notes were made at rehearsals and performances. The methods emphasised the importance of an ethical framework supporting the research process and the need to maintain a reflexive practice. The data was analysed using thematic analysis, which led to four key themes emerging from UK data and four from the Rio data. The UK findings are explored in Chapter 5,6,7 and 8 and the Rio findings are covered in Chapter 9.

Chapter 5 Leave That Shit at The Door

This chapter presents the first theme that emerged from the UK data. It proposes that community singing groups and choirs set up for people who experience homelessness, are physical and symbolic spaces that exist outside the rest of the singer's life. The real and symbolic walls as well as the rules and boundaries enable the space to become a place of 'other' which provides a welcoming safe environment that is an escape from the negative experiences associated with homelessness. The theme is explored through four sub-themes. *Real and Symbolic Walls* looks at how these groups are marked out from the rest of time, through a clear point of demarcation with visible and invisible walls. It considers who identifies as a member and who is positioned on the outside. *Rules and Boundaries* explores the explicit and implicit rules and boundaries of the group, the expectation on staff and singers to maintain them, and how these codes define the space as a place of other. *The Sanctuary* examines how the session is a warm emotionally safe space, where members are removed and shielded from experiences beyond the group and shown welcome and hospitality. *Challenging the Sanctuary* considers the relational and structural aspects that threaten this safe sanctuary. These findings are then explored in relation to current literature and theory.

5.1 Real and Symbolic Walls

The sessions take place within a physical environment. They are run in places that are separate and removed from the rest of the singer's life and the rest of society. Marie, the CEO from CWNN talked about the challenges and importance of finding the right community venue, which should be 'low key, easy place to be and…got the right vibe'. All the groups in the study ran their sessions in separate spaces, except the Lodging House Mission Choir which ran in the corner of the main hall of a homeless day centre. This group relied more on symbolic and emotional walls to create a place of other.

This symbolic point of separation and the emotional barriers are evident in many of the singer's reflections about their groups. Danny talked about putting his 'pack away for a few hours and you're no longer homeless', and other interviewees talked about leaving their 'shit at the door' or not bringing 'your problems in'. These reflections demonstrate that there is a threshold, a crucial demarcation point that is crossed when the space is entered. These accounts also suggest a place beyond the group that participants want to be removed from; a place that is unpleasant. This is something that recurred in all the singers' interviews, when asked about homelessness. Their experiences were generally very negative and painful memories were reported. These included testimonials of childhood abuse, domestic violence, loss of family, loss of job, isolation, mental illness, physical illness as well as assault and abuse while street sleeping. Singers talked about the group being a place of 'escape' and for some it was a place to 'hide' and you could get 'lost in the group.' Bob, a Manchester singer made a connection between specific activities and her sense of removal and escape saying, 'it brings you out of your situation…you can leave it behind and throw yourself into a story, into a performance and leave that shit behind for a couple of hours'

It is interesting to explore who sits on which side of the real or symbolic walls. While singers and staff stated that their groups were open to all and the terms 'inclusive' and 'welcoming' were consistently used, not everyone who met the criteria for joining did get involved. A participant of this study, who had not become a member was Jim, a musician and a user of the Lodging House Mission day centre. He often sat in the same room when the group was running each week but positioned himself as an outsider. His derisive language about the group and its members, highlights how he experiences the divide between himself and the singers. He said, 'even when they're not in the choir, most of them…whatever they do is always separate from everyone else'. In one sense he makes it clear that the invisible wall is very much present and is reinforced by singers removing themselves from other centre users, even after the rehearsal. This is illustrated by the singers choosing to sit separately at a 'top

table'. Jim gives no impression that he wants to make the transition across the divide, even though he believes those in the group receive preferential treatment within the day centre, saying 'they get everything'.

Jim brings an interesting but unique perspective of what it is like to be sitting outside of the group. The fact there are no physical walls between him and the music is a critical point. He responds negatively to sharing his space with the choir each week. He is critical of the song choices and says the singing is 'out of tune' and the piano being 'too loud'. Of one song he says, 'Let It fucking Be, I used to like that song before yous started singing it'. Jim does recognise though that others in the hall enjoy the experience, saying, 'other people will be sort of tapping their feet (.) and singing the odd bit along with it, aye.' No other group involved in the study rehearsed in the same room as other non-singers, so his experience may not be common to other non-members who use a homeless service where a singing group takes place. There was a further insight from Pete, a group leader around where people position themselves in relation to the real or symbolic wall. When discussing recruitment practices for his CWNN group he indicated that membership was 'self-selecting' and it was singers who identified themselves as matching the criteria. Singers were not asked if they were homeless or had experienced homelessness when they first arrived, but just informed about the aims of the choir and encouraged to decide for themselves if this was an appropriate group to join. Pete still maintained some influence over the membership; when he was approached by members from other music groups that he led, who wanted to join this CWNN singing group, he dissuaded them in order to maintain distinction between the two groups and preserve their individual identities.

5.2 Rules and Boundaries

There are explicit and implicit rules and boundaries that enable the groups to function and there is an expectation for staff and singers to maintain them. SO

and CWNN actively created group rules and guidelines that members were involved in writing.

The CWNN London group had a ‘Code of Conduct’, a ‘member written document’, displayed on a door where the meal was served. It outlined the organisation’s commitment to its members: ‘Our mission is to provide a safe environment for members to enjoy singing and to build their confidence and skills along the way’. It had twelve codes and some covered practical issues such as time keeping, mobile phone use, the impact of drug and alcohol use and personal hygiene. Others were relational, ‘we will always treat each other in a way in which we would wish to be treated’ and ‘we will respect each other equally, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, marital status, race, ethnic or national origin, religion age or disability’ and ‘we are stronger together than divided’. Another considered the role staff play within the groups, suggesting that they are largely responsible for enforcing the rules and boundaries. ‘If we are struggling with something or someone, we won’t harbour bad feelings but will ask for help from the choir director or one of the volunteers. This is backed up by singer Chris who said, ’some people are rude to people, but you’ve got to…not deal with it yourself but let the Support Worker…deal with it’. This indicates how the role of the staff is to enable the group members to adhere to the rules and boundaries. SO had a policy that at the start of each session the ‘rules’ for that group would be read out. The members influenced the rules and they were regularly adjusted to reflect the changing environment, whilst incorporating the views of those in the group. Charlie, the Support Worker had a large sheet of paper with his groups ‘guidelines’ that he produced every week for his Middlesbrough group, and these were called ‘Charlie’s Board’. His role in the group was critically linked to supporting singers to adhere to the rules. Both SO and CWNN had an explicit rule structure and support staff and volunteers were encouraged to help group members to adhere to the rules

Lodging House Mission Choir and Grassmarket Community Choir were run soley by a singing leader, without any additional support staff and they did not

have an explicit set of group guidelines and the rules. The responsibility lay with the leader to enforce boundaries. For group leader Celine, she was clear that her role involved being the disciplinarian:

> where you felt that person was being (.) like they'd overstepped the mark and it was a maybe like (.) they were constantly nagging at someone or constantly nagging at you and maybe there was a bit of bullying going on or whatever. But I think you have to go, 'right, wait a minute, enough's enough.

Celine recognised the inevitable challenge of having to fulfil multiple roles, 'there is a balance to be struck because you have to keep the session going and you have to take no nonsense'.

Anna, a singer at Inspire Choir reported that she had received a sheet with group guidelines when she joined, which she was asked to sign, but they had not been revisited since. She placed less importance on explicit rules and was more concerned with the implicit rules within her group. She was emphatic about the boundaries she expected other singers and staff to stick to, 'one thing is you don't, you don't discuss other people out of choir, it's nobody else's business'. Her interview included many tacit assumptions: 'we expected that nobody would talk about anybody, and nobody would judge anybody' and 'you can say as much as you like but know it's not going to go out-with the group' and 'nobody's allowed to judge you'. These terms, 'we expected' and 'you don't' and 'it's not' and 'nobody's allowed' all reinforce the implicit rules that she adheres to and convey her sense of what is right and wrong in the group and the expectations of being a member. These implied rules that enable the group to function appear to be the responsibility of the group members and are less about the staff enforcing them.

Members placed great importance on having rules and boundaries and it was critical that that these were enforced, and that a punishment was given when they were broken. Singer Ange was clear that 'everything needs rules', and for singer Matt the rules being fairly enforced was an important aspect of

participating in the group. He discussed the role his two leaders played in rule enforcing saying, 'you had to have like a bad cop, good cop', and in reference to one of his leaders said, 'he was the one that reined it in…he keeps us all in line'. The only punishment mentioned for breaking a rule, was missing some sessions. Singer King said in his CWNN group, if people had 'outbursts' or made 'racist remarks' then 'they get pulled out (.) asked to stay away for a couple of weeks'. On their return they would have a 'deep chat' with a member of staff before they were allowed to return to the group. The punishment of missing session was also reported by singer Matt:

> there's been a few people what 'ave been told to come back a couple of weeks later because, they've been not been barred, I don't know what the word is, they've done something wrong…and they've been told you're not allowed to come back for a couple of, after they come back after a couple of weeks, that problem what was there, they've had the punishment that was it… it's forgot about easily

When a punishment is given for breaking a rule, singer Matt says that he can move on from the issue and it is closed. However, when he feels the rules are broken with no consequences or they are not enforced equally or are not 'fair for everybody' he feels frustrated. He says:

> Now if I do something wrong right it's *pounced* on it's absolutely pounced on I'm getting in the meeting 'do it again and you're go'…see about 10 mins later me being in that meeting I see them doing it so I go over and say , look they're doing what I just done they're just doing what I just done not saying a bean, 'yeah but they've got that wrong with them, I said, what's the difference…you should say in the rules erm these rules may be bent on depends on your circumstances. That's the way I that's the way I see it

The most common rule that was broken in the sessions and discussed across the interviews related to the behavioural issues and tensions between members. This is explored fully in the following chapter. Pete, the leader spoke of the high expectations he had for his group, saying 'I think I set quite a high

kind of bar', particularly in terms of in-group behaviour. For one member of a CWNN group, the police were involved in creating very clear safeguarding rules with the organisation, to enable a singer to take part in the group. He was described as 'potentially a threat to…other vulnerable adults' and all the staff had to be vigilant in making sure the member adhered to the police rules. However, group leader Pete reported they were broken and he was permanently barred from the group:

> because he basically bailed on them um at that point. We took the decision…you know we've done our best to accommodate you and put special provision in…you're not keeping your part of the deal

Charlie, the support worker gave some insight why the rules exist and why there are consequences if people 'transgress the boundaries'. He argued, 'it's the *why* isn't it, why we have them…so they're not arbitrary rules they're…for an end' and suggested it was concerned with 'supporting their whole'. Charlie implies that the rules enable singers to learn about the consequences of their actions and address inappropriate social behaviour in a supported safe environment.

The implicit and explicit rules must not only be upheld by the group members, but they should be adhered to by the staff too. This was a point raised by the singer Ange. She was upset when she was criticised by a Support Worker in her group who she felt was unable to see the humour in a joke she made. She said, 'oh he went down on me like a dose of Epsom salts', and was angry that the member of staff 'treats people like children' and was delighted when he left the job. She had a close relationship with his replacement and implied there was more mutual respect. Respecting the rules enables the groups to function and there is an expectation that they will be upheld by staff and group members.

5.3 The Sanctuary

The previous themes have argued that the groups have real and symbolic walls which marks them out as a place of other and there are implicit and explicit rules that enable the groups to function. These two elements create a boundary around the group, that help to mark it out as a place of sanctuary. The sanctuary is a warm and emotionally safe space, where members are removed and shielded from challenging experiences beyond the group. They are separated from their experiences of broken relationships, poor health, loneliness and abuse. The group then is an act of removal where they not only leave their 'problems at the door', but feel welcomed, are shown hospitality and experience nurture and support. For Chris, his SO group is a place where he can forget; he is removed and distanced from very painful childhood and young adult experiences of abuse and neglect. He says:

> homeless is a difficult place to be, very difficult…I do still remember what's happened to me, but when I come to Streetwise or sing like, I forget so much

Scottish singer Benson discussed the same positive impact from singing:

> when you are thinking of things, when you are stressed, and you start singing you forget everything, and you concentrate on singing. So that's why I say singing is life. You don't think of anything else…when I start to thinking or when I'm depressed, stressed and start singing I'll forget everything…and I'll be happy

Both Chris and Benson describe the act of singing as functioning like a mental block, shutting down difficult memories. But singing also adds something, it brings a positive emotional element and relief from mental health issues. This creates the sanctuary. Chapter 6 will explore in more depth how participating in the groups has a positive impact on emotional and mental wellbeing.

Another aspect of the groups offering sanctuary is the welcome that singers receive when they participate. For singer William, from the Lodging House

Mission choir, he recalls the fear he experienced turning up the first day and then the welcome he received,

> I've never been in choir in my life before…it was nerve wracking 'cause you didnae know what to expect. But you [I was the choir leader at the time] were really helpful…you made me feel at ease as soon as I went up there …I just felt part of something straight away

This welcome reinforces the boundary that marks out the group as separate. For William, his welcome was from a member of staff, his group leader, but for other new participants, the welcome comes from other members of the group. Both SO and CWNN have ambassadors who are singers, they are given the role of identifying and welcoming new people to their groups. When describing his responsibilities as ambassador with CWNN, singer King said, 'when a new person comes in (.) introduce yourself' and then at the meal at the end of the session meal 'sit down with the new person'. Singer Chris took on the responsibility of welcoming new people without being an ambassador, saying, 'everyone's welcome to Streetwise… we all always make people welcome …especially me I am always welcome[ing]'. Matt, the founder of SO, speculated that this welcome might be especially crucial for people who have experienced homeless, because it 'may be the only place where someone knows your name'. Group leader Celine developed this idea and recognised her role was to help singers feel 'like they should be there, that you want them there'. The singer, Chris, noted that offering welcome was a key aspect of performances too and the audience had a responsibility to welcome singers. Talking about the first concert he was involved in he noted, 'the crowd are so welcoming' and said of the audience 'you've always got to <u>make</u> the people's who's performing feel welcome'.

As well as a warm welcoming reception, another feature of the groups and further evidence that the groups are a place of sanctuary is the hospitality that singers receive. For some groups this hospitality is through a shared meal, with staff and members. Anna, a singer from the Inspire Choir said, 'we get lunch in the middle: you get a soup and a roll, and you get as much cups of

tea as you like and it's great. You get fed to sing and it's fantastic'. Ree, an Area Manager for SO, spoke of providing meals for singers at performances, a 'hot meal together…wholesome and…home cooked', because SO did not know the last time their members might have had a warm meal. There is also a musical element of this hospitality. Singers are being given a gift of music, which singer William, described as 'peaceful and beautiful' and at SO, it was referred to as 'a life blood'. Hospitality is also demonstrated through the actions of the staff, especially the music leaders, who Charlie the support worker described as a 'generosity of spirit'. The leader's hospitality is demonstrated through their 'musical excellence', vocal arrangements, creativity, skilled leadership. It also comes from the care they show the group members: 'they don't push you', they 'make sure that people are constantly improving' and they show 'patience' empathy and 'understanding'. The sanctuary, then, is reinforced through the act of hospitality, which is demonstrated though food and drinks, through the music and the care shown by the staff.

Many singers talked about the sense of support and care they experienced from members of staff. Clair, a CWNN singer, formed a strong relationship with a member of staff in her group. She says of the support she received:

> there was a time I was really upset… I broke down in tears, I was struggling… I felt like my [hostel] key worker…she wasn't helping and I needed more support than, which obviously it's a big hostel you see she's got other lot of clients like 50 people … she's got other clients so makes it more hard for her to give me that support…so that why I went to [name of a member of support staff in Clair's singing group] …she was gonna look at different mentor or different things where I could talk to people

Mark, spoke of the help he receives from his group Support Worker, saying, 'he's just funny he just helps you, he just listens to you and he will give you advice'. Staff also spoke of their responsibility for supporting and caring for singers, with Charlie referring to his 'pastoral role' and how he supported the 'whole' singer. Members also gave and received care and support between

each other, which is explored further in Chapter 6. The issue of giving and receiving love was pertinent for singer Chris. He had been homeless and street sleeping since he was thirteen and lacked security and safety as a child. He said he now had dedicated his life to giving love to others and spoke of this in relation to his fiancé, his friends, to SO and towards his fellow singers. He said:

> I want people to see they're loved no matter where they're going to be…don't forget you're loved. If no one loves you, I'll love you myself, because I know exactly where you been and I know how hard it is now

The support, care and love that is observed within the groups creates an atmosphere of warmth and nurture, which adds to the sense that the group is sanctuary-like.

The group is also experienced as a place of safety. This was discussed from different perspectives. For some singers the sense of safety comes from being in a group with others who had a shared experience and as a result were non-judgemental. Singer Danny said, 'we're all the same here…there's no one better than anyone else in the group…everyone's in the same boat and no one's judging'. Marie the founder of CWNN, noted how the group leader brings security through forming a relationship with the members, saying, 'people feel safe because they know you' and 'the fact that you are directing it is going to give people that sense of safety'. It is interesting that feeling safe seemed to be present in groups regardless of their size. The singer Anna from the group Inspire which had twenty two singers the day I attended, talked passionately about the intimacy of her group and said, 'I'm not good at big crowds so this is why I enjoy this choir so much, because it's erm it's a smaller group'. As this group was specifically set up to welcome and support people with mental health issues and people who experienced homelessness, Anna found a place of intimacy that met her needs. Her performances were small closed events just for family and friends, with far less exposure than the big productions of SO and CWNN. In contrast to the small Inspire choir, the Birmingham CWNN

group had over fifty singers that might attend on any one night. Yet this group still aimed to meet the first mission statement to 'create a safe environment in which we welcome and support new and existing members, staff and volunteers'. Creating a place of safety was a key component of all the groups and the explicit rules create a safe environment.

The singer Ange captures how the group is a place of sanctuary when she said:

> we're like a patchwork quilt, all little patches and you's looking to get the whole big quilt you know and cover you to keep you warm and that's what it's like when you come here, it feels like it's welcoming and it warm

The symbolic and real walls and the rules create a place of separation and in this safe space, with singers and staff giving and receiving welcome, hospitality and care, so the groups become a place of nurture and sanctuary.

5.4 Challenging the Sanctuary

This chapter has considered the group as a physical and symbolic space sperate from the challenges of life outside. The space can become a sanctuary, where the singer feels protected within this safe environment and receive support and care. However, there are times when this safe space is threatened leading to a negative impact on members and staff. The biggest challenge to the sanctuary appeared to be fractious relationships between members, and this will be explored further in the Chapter 6. Although singers are encouraged to leave 'problems at the door' and abide by guidelines and rules, tensions between singers were explored across many interviews. For Charlie the SO Support Worker, this seemed to be one of the most demanding parts of his job. He recognised that 'maintaining <u>those</u> boundaries' was at times impossible and the tensions between singers was at times a 'barrier for them or others to keep participating'. Rivalry between singers, racism and romantic jealously was discussed by singers in the interviews. There was

further frustration when members felt the rules are not being applied equally, as this chapter has already explored. There was an argument in one group between two members around who was a more qualified singer in a group. Another recurring issue that caused tension was around which singers would be chosen to perform a solo or given a specific role in a production. This was a 'highly charged issue'.

The sanctuary of the singing space was further challenged when tensions between singers were brought from outside of the group into the sessions and performances. Group leader Pete mentioned one incident in his session where things 'almost kicked off'. Ange, a singer recalled one incident before a concert where tensions between two members rose to such a level that it was close to becoming a physical fight and the security staff at the building had to intervene. She said 'it gives people outside…the wrong idea of us', implying the incident brought feelings of shame. This reinforces the concept that the group is an emotional sanctuary which singers seek to maintain and fights and arguments impact on the sanctuary-like atmosphere and other singer's wellbeing. The group as a space that fosters wellbeing is explored in Chapter 7.

The staff and singers are very protective of the sanctuary that they have created. Group leader Celine spoke of her singers 'nagging' and bullying' others in order to protect the environment and control who is allowed to join. She said:

> there is a core group that have been here for the last few years who have actually got a little bit precious about their choir …and they're not keen for people who maybe are still (.) going *through* an addiction or are trying to come off drugs or alcohol…they're maybe a bit scared to have people like that in the choir…they don't really want to let other people in

Pete, a CWNN leader, sympathised and supported his regular singers when new members who joined the group and were not willing to conform and they challenged the status quo, saying:

> occasionally we have someone … who's pretty kind of a bit aloof or taking the piss a bit or um a bit kind of mocking of it…very kind of obviously um disrespectful. You know sort of slouching around when they're supposed to be standing and all sort of you know drinking a bottle of pop you know when we're supposed to…sing

Pete says the response of his regular singers leads to 'tension, but I think it's kind of I think it's a good tension in a way…because there's a shared ownership'. For new members then, the group may not feel like a place of sanctuary, but an environment where they may feel ostracised and alienated. This is a point worth exploring when looking at Jim, the non-singer's experience, who holds the position of outsider. He perceives the group as being a 'clique…they stay a unit' and describes the singers as '*judgemental*…people are looking and waiting for people to make *mistakes.*' This goes against many singers' perceptions of their own group as open and inclusive.

The sense of a sanctuary can be broken when there is a disruption to the status quo and the structure is dismantled or broken. For the singer Clair, she was in tears when she heard a member of support staff in her group was leaving and believed this was an indication that the group was ending:

> I got really upset as well and I was crying to [support staff member] that the fact she was leaving and er I thought it was going to end…it's the only thing that keeps me going

This demonstrates the fragility of the safe environment. Funding issues and staff changes are also a recurring concern that can impact the stability of the group. Marie from CWNN spoke of their two London groups having to join due to funding issues, which was an unsettling experience for singers. Celine also talked of 'a whole load of uncertainty' at the Lodging House Mission Choir, when the charity, Givin' it Laldie, that that initially formed the group, withdrew funding and staff and the management of the group moved to the day centre. The changes led to the group losing a choir leader, which also coincided with

the appointment two new senior members of staff at the day centre who did not know about the singing group's history and purpose. This had a detrimental effect on the stability of the choir and impacted the numbers of singers attending each week, which nearly resulted in the group being shut down. The sanctuary of these singing groups is fragile and dependant on appropriate staff to create the right atmosphere. It requires tensions between singers to be appropriately managed and for the funding and staffing structures to be securely in place.

Summary

Choirs and community singing groups that have been set up for people who have experienced homelessness are physical, symbolic, temporal and emotional spaces marked out from the rest of the singer's lives. Moving from outside to inside this space, involves a distinct demarcation point and this boundary is held in part through the implicit agreement of the staff and singers to uphold the rules and codes. These symbolic and real walls along with the rules and boundaries create a place of other and a sanctuary-like space. The idea of sanctuary is created through removing singers from challenges in their life beyond the group, blocking painful memories and creating a space that fosters emotional wellbeing. Singers experience feelings of welcome and are afforded hospitality and feel cared for and supported. Those within the group play a role in deciding who is welcomed in and who remains on the outside, as well as who might be rejected for not adhering to the guidelines or for pushing the boundaries. The perception from Jim, on the outside looking in, is that this is a space that he actively chose not to join and fears being judged. This sanctuary though, can be threatened; the rules can be compromised, and the group can be a place of change and uncertainty.

Discussion

These findings are discussed in relation to current literature and empirical research. The groups are places of other, marked out as separate from the

rest of the singer's life and experiences of homelessness and a sanctuary-like space is created and maintained through the rules that must be enforced by the leader. The boundaries around the group block some people from experiencing the welcome and hospitality.

5.5 A Place of Other

The groups in this study meet for a weekly session, which is marked out as separate and different to the rest of groups time. Like all community music sessions and rehearsals, these are 'events' and occurrences 'of some importance' (Ansdell, 2010). They denote a break or change in the ordinary flow of time; 'a disruption' and a 'point at which something happens' (p.146). For singers who have experienced homelessness though, this shift is especially pertinent. The experience of homelessness has been explored in Chapter 3 and is associated with increased risk of violence and lack of safety (Butchinsky, 2007), the loss of legitimacy to occupy space (Snow and Anderson, 1993; Somerville, 2013), lack of privacy (Stebbing, 2017) and associated stigma (McCarthy, 2013). When singers step over the threshold into the singing group they are entering a different 'spatial and temporal domain[s]' (Higgins 2012, p.144). Here they can be removed from the experience of homelessness and are no longer defined by their homeless identity and the associated stigma. It is a space that they not only have legitimacy to occupy but where they are welcomed (Higgins, 2012). DeNora's theory of music asylums (2015) supports the argument that music making spaces can be a place of other. She proposes that music can foster the optimum conditions to create an asylum through the process of 'removal'. By separating and dislocating from the source of discomfort, the singers experience a 'respite from distress' and 'absence, or temporary abatement of pain' (p.1). Her theory draws on Goffman's work on asylums (1978), where he spent time undercover in a psychiatric hospital exploring how patients maintained their sense of self within an institution. Despite the rigidity of the rules and structure, patients were able to find personal sanctuary; an asylum

within the asylum. Through stepping over the threshold and participating in their sessions, the singers are creating an asylum in their lives and a place of refuge.

Through the act of retreat and removal, the distress of homelessness can be blocked. Singers Chris and Benson in this study, illustrate the point when they talked about singing helping them to forget painful or difficult experiences. Other singers referred to leaving 'problems' or 'shit' at the door before they entered the space. The singers physically and symbolically relocate into a sanctuary-like space where they can transcend their homelessness and maintain their self- worth. For people who are homeless, seeking self-worth is a continuous process (Snow and Anderson, 1993). Music groups can act as a buffer (DeNora, 2015) from the experience of homelessness and this was evident with the research conducted with the group Som da Rua in Portugal (Boal-Palheiros, 2017). The study found that 'the collective musical practice in rehearsals and concerts occurs apart from their everyday lives' and these brought 'relief from their hard living conditions and problems' (p.76). The singing space then transforms into a place of sanctuary. Research by Thomas and colleagues (2012b) with participants who are homeless, found that feeling safe and secure are a key aspect of wellbeing.

The sanctuary-like space is only maintained by the staff and singers agreeing to maintain certain rules and social expectations. While people who are homeless 'do not constitute a homogenous population' (Snow and Anderson,1993, p.36), the experience of homelessness may present some unique issues including, 'social and psychological problems, due to years of drug consumption, violence, hunger and loneliness' (Boal-Palheoros, 2017 p.67). Boal-Palheoros (2017) proposed that singers who are homeless, may have greater challenges adapting to rules. Groups that are set up for people who are homeless may need to be more explicit in outlining and maintaining them. In fact, the singers in this study were emphatic in their discussion of the rules and ensuring they were fairly enforced. Boundaries and discipline are

not widely referred to in the literature around community choirs, although it is more common with groups set up for children (Pavlicevic,2012). However, the musical director at Som da Rua, the homeless group (Boal-Palheiros, 2017) was clear about the need for clear boundaries and held 'relatively high expectations regarding their behaviour' (p.75), like Pete the leader from CWNN, and noted that his musicians who were homeless may have 'difficulties to adapt to the rules' (p.67). At the Dallas Street Choir (Nordberg et al., 2018) the 'house rules' were permanently displayed on the wall during the rehearsal and the leader would not tolerate any 'bad' behaviour or deviation of the rules. Bailey and Davidson (2002) also noted that singers who were homeless may have developed social behaviours that are 'inappropriate in more normal social settings' (p.235) and that it was the role of the leader to 'control' people until the singers could 'prove themselves' in society. While this pejorative language reinforces a power dynamic between on one side the researcher and group leader, and on the other, the singers who are homeless, none the less the sentiment is useful. The clear and enforced boundaries are especially important for singers who are homeless, who may need additional help to adjust to the social codes within a session and these skills may help singers beyond the group in society.

The emerging theories around community music advocate for a more flexible and fluid attitude to the rules, believing them to be 'bendable' and changeable (Higgins, 2012). To some extent this was seen with SO and CWNN, who adjusted their codes and rules to reflect the opinions of the group members, but once they were agreed by the group there was a sense of rigidity and enforcement that was expected by the group members. This 'top-down' approach (Higgins, 2012), is not supported by current community music theory and has more in common with more formal music making groups (Murnighan and Conlon, 1991). This study also challenges the argument that community music should be 'nonheirarchical' (Higgins, 2012) and be 'democratic' spaces. However, theorists seldom use a choir model when they draw conclusions about the 'democratic sharing of ideas' (Higgins, 2012, p.76) nor are homeless

choirs used as an example. Choirs and opera workshops that include singers who are homeless require strong leadership; someone to make decisions around repertoire choice, to instil order and enforce the social rules. There is a tension here though for the leader. As community musicians they want to create a democratic environment, but when working with musicians who are homeless, they recognise the need to uphold the rules and maintain the power structure. This was evident at Som da Rua, (Boal-Palheiros, 2017), where the role the leader must perform, 'may contradict the genuine wish of the musical director and his idealized image of the group being totally democratic' (p.75). This hierarchy is experienced by group participants too. When choir members discussed the leader of a Montreal homeless choir, they described him as having 'a doctorial rather than a democratic approach' (Bailey and Davidson, 2002, p.235) and were critical of him favouring some members over others.

The choirs and singing groups set up for those who are homeless creates a refuge and sanctuary and removes people from the 'shit' of life associated with homelessness. Within the space the singers find legitimacy to be and search for self-worth. Clear rules and boundaries are needed but these may help give singers the skills to reintegrate back into society. The rules must be enforced by the staff and the group leader, making it an undemocratic place.

5.6 The In-group

It is the responsibility of the staff and especially the group leader to develop a range of skills in order to meet the needs of the singers who are homeless. The previous section has explored how the leader is a disciplinarian, but it is also incumbent upon them to offer welcome and hospitality, and also conduct 'sheltering work' (DeNora, 2015), giving emotional support and nurture. Higgins (2012) describes the community musician being like a 'Swiss army knife' (p. 47) in terms of the musical skills required, but there are many other 'tools' that are needed by the leader. Andsell (2014) referred to a music therapist who managed a community open mic session, which included

patients from a psychiatric hospital and member of the public. He noted that she, 'invites, welcomes, attends to, engages with, entertains, and generally places the guests' needs before her own' (p.206). He also recognised the 'tougher responsibilities of tolerating and negotiating with more challenging guests' (p.206). Community musicians have been described as 'boundary walkers' and this term reflects the complexity and tensions of the skills required of the role. A broad skill set is even more apparent when leading a group of musicians who are homeless. 'Social and psychological problems' (Boal-Palheiros, 2017, p.67) can lead to challenging behaviour and the emotional fragility of the singers (Bailey and Davidson, 2002) may demand greater empathy and compassion than with a mainstream community choir.

Hospitality is a defining feature of community music (Ansdell, 2010, 2014) and begins with an unconditional invitation or welcome. This was evident in the study with Som da Rua (Boal-Palheiros, 2017), where 'the director greets all participants and welcomes new members or those who have been absent for a long time' (p. 69). Another form of hospitality is musical, through the leader offering their songs, accompaniments and arrangements, their 'gifts' (Higgins, 2012). Further hospitality is demonstrated through giving refreshments and food and eating and drinking together as a group, engaging in a normalised activity and a 'return to the everyday' (Ansdell, 2014, p.215). Some of the groups in this research shared a meal at sessions and performances indicating a closeness and an intimacy, with the group resembling a family (Mary Douglas, 1977). The singers who are homeless also offer hospitality when they are giving their performance, their 'gift', to audiences (Ansdell, 2014).

A community evokes an image of a closed and bound group (Higgins, 2102) and for a community to form, there must be something resembling an edge, a point of 'closure'. Higgins prefers the term 'hospitality' over 'community' when exploring the field of community music, as it reflects his theory of inclusion and 'equality of opportunity'. However, groups are defined by their borders and boundaries and for an in-group to exist, there must be others who remain on

the outside. Both Jim, who was interviewed for this study and the singers who were asked to leave or not welcomed in the groups constitute an out-group to the homeless choirs and singing groups. Jim is very negative about the group which links to social identity theory (Turner et al., 1979); which proposes that positive self-esteem is maintained through discriminating against an out-group. Jim's in-group are the other non-singers in the homeless centre and his out-group are the Lodging House Mission Choir. By distancing himself from the singing group, he maintains his positive self-identity and his status in the centre. Two interviewees in this study talked about singers being permanently removed from a session due to behavioural issues and this was also reported with a homeless choir in Montreal (Bailey and Davidson, 2002). They reported that '1 member was asked to leave because of unacceptable behaviours related to substance abuse'. (p. 230). In this respect the homeless singing groups are not offering 'unconditional acceptance' (Ansdell, 2014, p.206); singers are included if they are willing and able to adhere to the rules and social norms of the groups.

Singers who are homeless have differing needs that must be addressed in the group. It is the responsibility of the leader to offer welcome and hospitality, and fulfil the roles of disciplinarian, nurturer and the leader of the music. The walls around the group create the sanctuary and place of asylum, but also block others from participating and separate the singers from others.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter argues that the singing groups are temporal, spatial and symbolic places, removed from the everyday. The space is held by explicit and implicit rules and boundaries and maintaining them is especially pertinent for this singing population who can present challenging behavioural and psychological issues. Separating singers from their experiences of homelessness creates a safe sanctuary-like asylum where singers can experience welcome and hospitality and where people who are homeless have a legitimate right to be

and exist. Enforcing acceptable social rules and norms may give the singers the tools and skills to enable them to reintegrate back into society.

The boundaries that maintain the space are held through the skills of the group leader and other staff. It requires the leader to play a more authoritarian role than might be seen in other community singing groups and they also perform a nurturing role in response to the needs of group members. These roles challenge the community music theory, that spaces should be democratic and non-hierarchical, and highlights the power imbalance between staff and singers. This research has also indicated the lack of inclusivity in the groups. Members can be asked to leave or are ostracised if they do not conform to the rules and codes or merge into the current group. The symbolic walls around these group are critical in making them safe and creative and giving the singers a sense of ownership and empowerment, but also keep out those that threaten the sanctuary.

Chapter 6 We Are Family

This chapter explores the second of the emergent themes from the UK data. It considers the social and relational aspects of participating in the groups for singers and is divided into four sub-themes. The first looks at *Group Identity* and how the organisation and members perceive their groups and negotiate the homeless label. *Relationships Between Members* is the second sub-theme and explores the social benefits of participating and the complexity of these interactions. The third considers the *Relationship with the Group Leader*, exploring the different roles the leader must perform and how the members perceive their leader. The final sub-theme explores *Relationships with People Outside the Group* and the interactions that members have with other singers from homeless groups, celebrities who support the work, and arts professionals who are employed to assist with the groups. These themes will then be explored in reference to relevant literature and theory.

Social isolation and loneliness are key themes in the literature on homelessness, with people experiencing social exclusion and prevented from fully engaging in society (Sanders and Brown, 2015). Chapter 3 has explored how the relationships that people form during the experience are complex and while they may bring support and distraction during homelessness, they can be challenging and prevent people from moving out of the homeless culture (Ravenhill, 2008). The founder of SO, Matt Peacock, indicated that social exclusion was one of the main drivers for setting up his charity. A fundamental core value of SO is 'Community: the social side of our work is important. We never forget that what we create is community as well as art' (*Streetwise Opera*, 2009). SO closely monitor the social impact for their members, recording the positive short-term, medium-term and long term outcomes of membership for increasing inclusion. Having social support and an active network of friends has been identified as a positive indication of a person holding onto their tenancy once they have transitioned out of homelessness (Bailey and Davidson, 2005).

6.1 Group Identity

This first theme considers how members perceive their group identity and how the homeless label is negotiated. The identity is established and reinforced through singers exploring their perceptions of their group. Danny from SO described his fellow singers as 'we're all the same…in the same boat' and singer Clair said, 'you're not on your own, there's other people's that's like you'. Charlie, the Support Worker, supported this idea and observed that his group members connected through a 'collective adversity'. Danny felt the group members tended to 'gel' as 'we've all been there; we've all done that'. Bringing together people who shared the same experiences and life-history led to singers feeling 'no-one's judging you' and of being accepted. This reinforces the idea of the group being a sanctuary, explored in Chapter 5; singers are part of an environment that is experienced as a 'safe place, knowing that people are similar to you'. Ange, another SO singer, recognised and celebrated the differences between singers. She experienced group identity as a 'quilt', made up of little pieces that represented people from 'all walks of life'. However, Anna, celebrated the space and distance between herself and other group members saying:

> I like to remain anonymous…so this is why I enjoy the choir so much because it's erm it's (.) a smaller group…you don't necessarily know everyone, but you can speak to everybody…you don't discuss other people out of the choir, it's nobody else's business

While Anna felt she could be inconspicuous and remain hidden within her group she still had the experience that other group members 'won't judge you'.

The group identity is influenced by the motivation and focus of the organisations who set them up. CWNN and SO both promote themselves as organisations specifically set up for people with experience of homelessness. CWNN's strapline is, 'choirs for people

affected by homelessness' and SO promote their groups as being 'for people who are or have been homeless'. However, 'homeless' label is experienced flexibly by members. When Clair, a singer from CWNN, when asked to describe her group, she did not identify with the label, but said:

> well it's a choir called Choir With No Name and er it's for people that's mental health and anxiety and stuff like that, depression and other kind of …issues or whatever. That kind of helps them like with their confidence like me and erm self-esteem you know, to feel better about themselves and get to know people as well as make friends

Clair's focus was on the emotional and social benefits and impact it had on mental health. Bob, a singer from Manchester, was very aware of the homeless criteria when she became a member of her SO groups. She had originally been a volunteer with the group but her life situation and deteriorating mental health led her to 'change her status' from volunteer to member. She clearly identified with the homeless group label and said:

> a lot of these guys are in exactly the same housing situation as I am. So, what am I doing here being a volunteer when I'm really not ready to be volunteering (laugh) with these guys, I should be here as a participant

King, a singer from CWNN in London talked about a member in his group who was frustrated by the 'homeless' identity and did not want to be associated with the label. King however described the singer as someone who was on the 'margins of society' and for King this justified his inclusion. Self-identifying as a group member and fitting the criteria was discussed in relation to new recruits with CWNN in Birmingham. Pete, the leader, said that potential members were not asked about their housing situation before they joined, but were informed who the group was set up for and then asked, 'is that something you can identify with…which is a kind of slightly round-about way of saying, you know, have you ever been homeless.' Singers have a mixed relationship

to the label of homelessness, but when SO asked its members if they wanted to move away from the label of homelessness as an organisation, there was a unanimous decision to keep the association with homelessness, suggesting a pride in being linked to a homeless identity. This reflects the identity talk used by people who are homeless called 'embracement' (Snow and Anderson, 1993), which indicates an acceptance of the homeless identity.

Both SO and CWNN had explored being more flexible around who they welcomed into their groups. Although they were set up and promoted as organisations for people who have been or are currently homeless, they had both considered expanding their membership criteria to help grow the organisations and make them more sustainable. Maria at CWNN said her Board had discussed making the groups more inclusive and integrated, including people who had not experienced homelessness. This idea been raised with a group member at a trustee meeting who was initially keen on the idea, saying, 'the more the merrier' before deciding he would find it 'quite difficult' if he had an alcohol relapse and then attended his group and felt people could not relate to his situation. This resonates with Danny's comments at the start of this section, who argued that because group members share a common history and life experience they are 'in the same boat' and feel they are understood and accepted by others and less likely to be judged. The SO group in Middlesbrough had diversified their membership, actively including singers who were seeking asylum, refugees and residents from a closed mental health ward. Founder Matt felt it was 'probably a mistake to work with just one group' and that including people who were at risk of homelessness helped to expand and sustain the organisation.

The group identity was embodied and reinforced through the singers wearing group t-shirts for performances, visually separating 'us' from 'them'. Danny discussed the element of uniformity that the t-shirts brought, 'everyone that day was wearing exactly the same…when we get together, we've all got our t-shirts on'. The solid block of colour made a statement about belonging, group

identity and visibility, making the singers the most significant visual focus at a performance. Boal-Palheiros (2017) argued that a when a homeless choir all wears the same clothing, it helps to 'symbolically level out social differences' (p. 74).

When members engage in identity talk, they use language that reinforces that they are now part of a group and are now a 'we'. When singers discussed performances, they used language such as, lifting 'each other up', patting each other 'on the back at the end of the show', the 'buzz of being together'. Successful performances were a group achievement and Danny said, 'we've nailed it, we done that'. King gave an account of a singer experiencing negative emotions after he had made a mistake at a concert. He said it was the group that gathered 'round and eh let them know it was ok and have another go'. Performances also lead to a collective sense of achievement applauding and giving a standing ovation, 'in amazement when they see what we do'. Performances are a key time for the group to reinforces their identity in front of an audience and in the community. Chapter 8 will explore performances in more detail and how they increase the visibility of the singers.

The singers arrive at the session as individuals but through stepping over the threshold and entering a safe space with others, they become part of a collective and adopt a group identity. They reinforce this identity when they talk about their group and perform group behaviours.

6.2 Relationships Between Members

The experience of being in a group and forming relationships with other singers is a fundamental aspect of participating. There are many social benefits that arise, but the relationships can be complex and there are tensions between singers. The groups are spaces where new meaningful and healthy relationship can be formed and members are reminded, 'you're not on your own'. Interviewees talked about the types of relationships that had formed in

their groups. Some described their fellow singers as friends, with Chris saying, 'I've got loads of friends from Streetwise, absolutely loads' and that his 'best friend' was in the same group. Romantic relationships had formed and one of the interviewees from Manchester was engaged to a fellow singer. Some members referred to the love they felt for other singers and Danny showed his admiration and respect for his fellow singer Andy, a participant in this study, when he said, 'he's really good, makes a brilliant ambassador'. There were specific positive social outcomes that emerged from the data.

Tolerance, Understanding and Acceptance

Increased tolerance and understanding between singers was explored by staff and singers in Middlesbrough. This SO group included people seeking asylum and refugees, and Rachel, one of the singers, felt her lack of English was a barrier to communicating with other singers. However, she found that sharing an Arabic song enabled her to musically introduce herself and share her culture. She said, 'you make them know your culture, your kind of music'. By meeting new singers from outside the UK and exploring new cultures though their music, Ree, the SO area coordinator said that singers were more accepting and receptive to others. She recounted a conversation with one group member who said she felt 'far less racist and she's suddenly changed her opinions', through being in a group with singers from other cultures and countries.

Welcome and Hospitality

One of the key benefits to engaging in any community music group is receiving welcome and hospitality, which is given to members by the organisations, staff and singers. This was explored in Chapter 5. The role of the ambassador in SO and CWNN is fundamental to new singers feeling welcomed into the group and easing into the formation of new relationships. Jim, the non-member indicted the fear of arriving at a new place, saying, 'people won't go alone into

places' and they need someone they know to accompany them for the first visit. The ambassadors seem to fulfil this role in some respects, actively welcoming the new arrivals, making them tea and soothing the transition into the group. However, the welcome and hospitality only extends so far, and ambassador King noted that singers generally only sit and talk with the people they already know, saying 'we don't all mix up'. Singer Matt supported this saying that due to the limited about of social time during the rehearsals, members just chatted to the same people each week. This suggests that coming to the groups as a new person could be challenging as friendships have already been formed and singers take the opportunity to spend time with the people they already know. This was reinforced in the theme in Chapter 5, Challenging the Sanctuary, where new singers who do not conform to the rules and codes of a group can be ostracised and alienated and current members 'don't really want to let other people in'.

Performances, however, were described as an opportunity for deeper relationships to be formed. The singer Matt said that when his group spent more time together rehearsing and performing for the production of The Passion, everyone got to know each other better and connect more deeply. Members then 'trusted each other more'. He gave an example of where he had changed his opinion of another member after spending more time with him, saying:

> …in The Passion we had *loads* of time…we was actually getting to know, oh this person is not really moody, this person's on tablets depressant tablets…like there was this lad something happened he was really really moody…but then he shared something… with the group a day later, something happened to one of his family members so he opened up, brilliant.

Despite some groups having an organisational structure that strives to welcome new singers, being accepted by others, forming relationships and being absorbed into the group is not instant or guaranteed. The concerts,

however, may provide the space and additional time for these connections to form naturally.

Support and Care

The staff interviewed across the study commented on the mutual support and care that was evident among members, with both group leaders commenting on how singers need and rely on each other. When someone was missing, Pete said it is like a 'hole' in the group and Celine said that when a singer was absent, particularly at a performance, it 'would have a big effect'. The support network that the groups created extended beyond the singing space. Pete discussed singers in his group who let friends in the group stay overnight in their house on the sofa after a concert. Charlie, the Support Worker, spoke of the 'love and care' between members and their sense of responsibility with singers being 'very supportive' and Celine noting that 'everybody wants to help each other'. This however did sometimes bring a new challenge for the staff. Charlie observed that members wanted to get involved by 'putting in their input when it's not appropriate' rather than leaving it to him to resolve an issue. He said, 'sometimes the love and care they have for each other, which is lovely, can make my job a little bit more difficult sometimes, because everybody wants to be involved with everybody else'.

Sense of Belonging and Family

A theme that ran through many of the singers' interviews was the group as a place of belonging. Clair, a CWNN singer, said, 'I just feel I belong here, and this is what I am meant to be doing'. Her perception is the group need her and she needs the group. William, a singer from Glasgow, experienced this the first day he arrived, he said he 'felt part of something straight away' as if the group in a sense had been waiting for him to come. His language mirrored the terms he used when joining a street gang in his youth, 'just to be, to feel part of something'. Pete the group leader said that belonging to a community was the main incentive that kept people hooked to the group and drawing them to

return and stay committed. The use of the term belonging suggests a warm close experience, the positive aspect of being in close relationship with others. Some singers, particularly from SO gave a sense that they also felt they belonged to the wider organisation. Chris said, 'I love Streetwise to bits', and Danny had very clear sense of his role and investment in SO, particularly revealed when he used language such as 'we like it when' and 'we tend to like people to'.

Developing this idea of belonging and connection to others is the notion of 'family' that was also discussed across the interviews. Rachel used the term 'family' to describe her relationship to her group. Although language and cultural barriers prevented her verbally interacting with others, she still described fellow members saying, 'they are my family'. Family system theory (Bowen, 1978) considers the individual as part of a wider unit and acknowledges the roles they must perform within the family and the rules they must respect. In relation to the participants in this study, the theory reflects the singers being not just a part of something, belonging to the group, but involved in relationships that require accommodation of others and compromise. The CWNN Code of Conduct implies that compromise and acceptance are fundamental to the organisation. It says, 'We recognise we are stronger together than divided and we will put the groups best interest before our own' and 'we will always treat each other in a way in which we would wish to be treated'.

Pete, the group leader, discussed the challenges that his singers had with their own families and the lack of 'normal' social networks that non-homeless people enjoy, noting his singers, 'just don't have that'. Despite their 'lack of family', Pete says his singers still held the 'forlorn hope' that they would come and see the group perform:

> We've had this sort of discount ticket scheme available you know…and it's really sad that quite a few of them had initially oh yeah my um er maybe my kids will come or maybe my um my

> parents…but then when the time comes to actually take the tickets um they've kind of back tracked and said actually I don't think they'll be coming… that's not one person, that seems to be quite a common thing

Pete proposes that his group replaces the missing family and social networks and it becomes a place 'where they belong' and where singers feel they are 'part of a community'. This sense of family is reinforced at the shared meal that CWNN and the Inspire Choir serve at each session.

Tensions between Group Members

The explicit rules that some groups have introduced and the implicit codes that members expect others to adhere to, seek to minimise the impact of the challenges and tensions that arise between singers. These were explored in the theme Leave That Shit at the Door, in Chapter 5. They encourage social behaviour that is acceptable to the group by requiring singers to manage their own behaviour. They also reinforce social codes which help draw clear boundaries and there are consequences for breaking the rules. The SO code of conduct has a clear intention to maintain 'structure and boundaries' in order to make the session a 'safe place'. CWNN's Code of Conduct requires members to 'respect each other equally' and says, 'if we're struggling with…someone we won't harbour bad feelings but will ask for help...'. An issue that was widely discussed cross the interviews was inappropriate behaviour between members. There was an expectation across all the groups that people would leave 'difficulties at the door' and ask the staff for support.

The members discussed challenges and tensions within the group. Chris was frustrated by people in his group not listening to the leaders, Benson talked about racist comments that had been made towards him and there was romantic jealousy between two members, who had both dated the same singer. An issue that arose in the Glasgow group when new singers who were 'going through addictions' and whose social behaviour was deemed

inappropriate, experienced ‘nagging’ and ‘bullying’ from other regular singers. Charlie, the support worker, discussed a challenge in his Middlesbrough group:

> there are two people that were very close that have fallen out because of something outside of Streetwise …it’s quite difficult but they’re…trying very hard not to make it impact on Streetwise

The singers who were interviewed for this study want to continue coming to their groups, despite these challenges. Charlie suggests that conflict will never be eradicated and says that keeping tensions out of the group, ‘sometimes that’s impossible’, but staff must be able to manage the conflict. Marie, the CEO from CWNN said:

> we don’t get a lot of trouble in rehearsals, we never really have had, but on the moments when you do have, you need the choir director to be able to coast through it or deal with it properly

Pete, a CWNN group leader, described one incident in his group:

> a couple of difficult characters who were with us for a while and things sometimes escalated and um we never had any proper punch-ups but we’ve had sort of you know, things that almost kicked off a couple of times…but you know very few and far between

Staff were ultimately responsible for resolving conflicts and where a Support Worker was employed for the group this was largely their responsibility. For leader Celine, who was the only person running her group, the responsibility fell solely to her. Her challenge came from having to ‘take no nonsense’ whilst still making the group inviting enough so that people want to get involved. There were also tensions relating to being picked for solos at performances, and CWNN Pete said, ‘I have gone through phases of thinking I just wish we didn’t have solos and we were just, were all just a choir’. While it proves to be a useful catalyst for ‘boosting people’s confidence’, it is a ‘highly charged’ issue, which leads to complaints, jealousy and tension between members.

The interactions between group members brings many social benefits and deep and supportive relationships can be formed and sustained. However, conflict between singers has been reported universally across all the groups in this study and the group members are supported in managing these tensions. The group leader plays a critical role in enabling members to remain and flourish in the groups.

6.3 Relationship with the Group Leader

The most significant relationship for singers after those made with other group members, was with the group leader. They play critical role in supporting and enabling the singers to remain members. Singers viewed their relationship with the group leader as a positive experience. Singers said, they were 'fantastic', 'brilliant staff', 'inspiring'. They 'cheer you up' and showed 'patience' and 'understanding', they were 'helpful' and 'put you at ease'. The extrovert leaders received the most attention by singers in the interviews. They were described as 'bubbly' or 'entertaining', had a sense of humour, were 'upbeat' or as Matt said of one of his leaders, 'he's the one that gets us buzzing'. Leaders were respected for their musical skills, their 'profound deep musicality' and it was important that they needed to 'know what they are doing'. Benson talked of the gratitude he felt for all the group leaders of his three choirs, including Grassmarket Community project that I led for two years, saying I 'owe you a lot'.

There was a sense that respect had to be earned by the leaders and was not given automatically. Singer Matt had only connected with one of his leaders after he had spent time with him around a performance. Originally, he thought he was 'just doing his job' and had too much focus on discipline. But, 'his feelings changed' when he spent time with him at extended rehearsals, and Matt said that 'after The Passion, I got so much respect for him'. Matt suggests that it is not enough for a leader just to come to work and do their job, the role

demands more. Anna said, ‘you need somebody who absolutely loves what they’re doing’ and Ange commented that it was important that leaders have a ‘passion’ for their work and said, ‘the leaders must love doing it as well, they must get a buzz out of it’.

There are three key areas that have emerged from the research that highlight the different roles the group leader performs and how they relate to the singers. These are summarised in Table 7.

Offering Care and Support	**Enforcing Rules and Boundaries**	**Enabling Music Participation**
Offer welcome and hospitality. Support singers emotional and mental wellbeing. Impact on mood and motivation. Demonstrate empathy and understanding. Be fun and entertaining.	Uphold and enforce organisational Codes of Conduct and guidelines. Promote implicit rules for good group functioning. Support healthy social boundaries	Bringing and sharing musical expertise. Selecting and arranging appropriate repertoire. Effective teaching and musical support to develop singers’ musicality.

Table 7. The Singing Leader Competency Model

The three main roles that the group leader must fulfil is to nurture and care for the singers, to be the disciplinarian and enforce the rules and to enable the participants to engage in music. Where the group leader worked alone, they

were responsible for meeting all three on their own. When a Support Worker was employed, they played a key part in enforcing rules and boundaries, also offering care and support. However, the musical aspects were always the responsibility of the group leader. Charlie the Support Worker said. 'they're there for the singing, they're there for musical reasons. I'm there for anything else'.

Celine, the group leader who worked alone wanted more staff support to enable her to focus on the music and maximise the groups abilities. She implied that her focus was primarily giving support and enforcing boundaries, and this was her priority. These concerns had to be addressed before she could focus on the music. She said her preferred staff team would be, 'three members of…choir staff, if you like, which I suppose is ideal, but maybe (laughs) a luxury'.

Singers explored the ways that they related to their leaders. In terms of their teaching style there was a sense they were 'music enablers' and 'leaders' rather than acting 'like teachers', which had negative connotations. For Danny this meant 'encouragement…without them pushing you'. The closeness of the relationship between staff and singers was discussed. Ange described the relationships saying, 'it's friendship with the staff', but she also was aware that there needs to be 'boundaries…they can't come into our kind and we can't go into their, which is good, you need that'. Singer Matt also recognised this tension within the relationship, saying 'not like a friend because they can't be friends, but like a person who he was, not just a leader'. This suggests there is an intimacy and closeness experienced by some of the singers towards their leaders, but they also were aware of the need for professional space.

The group leader plays a fundamental role in enabling the groups to function. They create the right emotional environment by ensuring the rules are enforced and that singers feel emotionally supported. Singers accepted these conflicting roles raising no issues and were overwhelmingly positive about their

leaders, particularly once they had got to know them and they had earned the singers respect. The non-musical demands on the leader take the focus away from delivering music and perhaps a greater musicality of the singers and greater musical skills could be developed if there are support staff to meet the non-musical needs.

6.4 Relationships with People Outside the Group

Interactions with Other Singers in SO and CWNN

The singers from SO and CWNN belong to a wider network of groups and both organisations seek to create opportunities for singers to come together and sing and perform. With SO there was a history of bringing groups together from different cities to do a big production, for example, the Manchester group went to London to perform with SO members. A similar idea is still modelled in CWNN where their groups come together once a year for a joint concert with all four choirs in London. CEO, Marie, from CWNN talked of the benefits, 'it's the same with any group isn't it, you spend more time with each other then you bond better…it's just about a shared experience'. Marie confirmed how much their singers enjoy these mutual gatherings and would like to do it more often, but it is 'just expensive', which prevents more opportunities. Matt supported this saying, 'everyone really wants to do it' but it is a 'logistical challenge'.

The singers were very positive about meeting up with other group members from across the organisation, but SO members felt they did not have enough opportunities. Chris said singers:

> always like to see each other, 'cause we never see each other, very rare… and we always like welcoming each other and saying, how yous doing and how's Streetwise going?

Ange missed meeting up with her nearest group in Newcastle, where she had previously enjoyed 'sharing your different stories and different experiences' and observed that despite not seeing each other, 'we're not separated we're

kind of still together'. Being part of the same organisation lead to feelings of connection. There was no sense of any tension between the groups, only a 'healthy competition' although Danny noted some jealousy from other members, when the Manchester SO groups were involved in the big production of The Passion. Where singers were involved in two groups in the same city the bond appeared to be even stronger. Danny said, 'even though we're in two separate groups, when we perform, we perform as one'.

For CWNN and SO members, their interactions with other singers who are homeless in the same organisation extends their social and support networks. It strengthens the group identity and reinforces their position as a singer who is homeless, normalising the experience.

Interactions with Celebrities and Arts Professionals

For these same groups that sit within the bigger organisations, the high-profile shows bring an added element of prestige with members having an opportunity to meet and work with professionals and celebrities. It was the Manchester SO singers who reported meeting famous people, through the large scale show The Passion, which raised a huge amount of interests across the city and was televised on the BBC. Matt, the singer, gives an insight into the experience of meeting one of his idols, an actor from Coronation Street. He joked with him after one performance, 'I don't really like you on Coronation Street, you're a bit of a bully aren't you' and then asked 'I'm not being funny but we're having a little party over the road do you want to come?'. Two actors from Coronation Street came to the after show party. Other people from this soap opera had a close relationship with the SO groups in Manchester. A photo of the actor, William Roache, who played Ken Barlow was on the wall at the Booth centre, where one of the SO groups met. Danny spoke of the support the centre received from 'celebrities and dignitaries' who 'come in and out of the centre quite a lot'. He demonstrated his pride in these relationships when he said, 'it's just that amazement when they see what we (.) do'.

There were also significant encounters with music and theatre professionals associated with the performance. For example, informal relationships were made with the renowned Penny Wollcock who directed the SO show The Passion, as well as The Sixteen, an internationally famous choir who performed alongside SO members. There was a mutual benefit to this relationship. Singers, Danny and Matt both spoke about their surprise at being accepted by these famous outsiders and everyone was being treated equally. Danny said:

> when we used to have lunch together and breaks together it wasn't like they'd sit on one table and we'd sit on another table or whatever. We all inter-mixed. And it was nice getting their feedback that they were getting something out from working with us, not just us getting something out of working with them. So, I think it was two-fold in a way

It seems Danny felt accepted by these professionals and enjoyed being treated as an equal and fellow musician. He implied that audiences would struggle to tell them apart, saying they found 'it was very hard to establish who was who'. One of the CWNN groups had a concert supporting Coldplay and doing a mini-tour with the group, which brought prestige and visibility to the organisation.

These relationships elevate the position of the singers through their association with high profile artists. These relationships are managed and are conducted in a safe environment, but they are significant in that people from outside the sanctuary are being invited in and included in the group. In this respect society is starting to cross over the boundaries of the group and enter the music asylum (DeNora, 2015).

Summary

Participating in singing groups set up for people who have experienced homelessness creates opportunities to form new relationships. The most significant for singers is with other members of the group, but these are complex interactions. Members receive many social benefits; they make new

friends and create support networks; they are welcomed and achieve a sense of belonging and being part of a family; they develop their tolerance and understanding of others. These are significant benefits in light of the experience of homelessness, which is equated to isolation and loneliness and the potential formation of unhealthy relationships that can keep someone trapped in a homeless situation. The relationships between members though, can also be fractious and challenging and the rules are in place to help support these tensions. Members are supported to develop the tools for healthy interactions and these skills may be transferable to life beyond the group and integrating into society.

The singers' relationship with the choir leader is a key part of the group experience and staff not only help enforce the rules to ease social interactions between singers, but also offer care and nurture and are responsible for delivering the musical experience. The group leader then has to fulfil a complex role whilst earning the respect of the group members. The relationships formed with other singers who are homeless, and arts professionals extends the social network of the group members, but within a safe and controlled environment. These interactions with the arts professionals open a pathway for the singers to integrate back with society and enable singers to form meaningful relationships beyond the homeless sector.

Discussion

The findings from this study are discussed in relation to current literature and theory. This discussion proposes that people who are homeless seek connections with others in order to experience wellbeing and that music-making provides a suitable environment. The need to belong is particularly prevalent for people who are vulnerable, but close family-like networks can bring challenges and compromise. The social skills and benefits enjoyed in the group may be transferred outside of the singing space.

6.5 Social Inclusion

Humans have an innate need to form bonds and make connections with other people (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). Our need to experience a sense of belonging meets a fundamental survival and reproductive requirement and a group is a more successful entity, than an individual operating alone (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). The experience of social exclusion, isolation and loneliness can have a detrimental effect on health and wellbeing and music therapist, Ruud, has said a society that is fragmented is the biggest threat to an individual's quality of life (1997a). The World Health Organization list social exclusion as one of their key determinants of health inequalities (Popay et al., 2008). Anxiety, depression, grief and loneliness and relationship problems are linked to people being unable to meet their need to belong (Baumeister & Leary 1995). Loneliness is an increasing concern in the UK with an expected two million people over the age of fifty, expected to feel lonely by 2026 (*Age UK*, 2018).

The experience of social isolation and loneliness for people who are homeless in the UK exceeds the national average and brings with it additional psychological, physical health and wellbeing concerns. Crisis, (Sander and Brown, 2015), conducted research with five hundred and six homeless service users and found that 61% of people reported feeling lonely, three times higher than the loneliest non-homeless group. This is linked to depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem. Loneliness leads to feelings of guilt and people are more susceptible to feelings of rejection (McWhirter, 1990). It also has a negative effect on life expectancy (McWhirter, 1990) and suicide rates (Rokach, 2005). Social exclusion and isolation for those who are homelessness brings an experience of existing on the 'outside' of society and a loss of self (Bell and Walsh, 2015). Making new social connections for people who are homeless is complex and while expanding a social network is beneficial for health and wellbeing, people experience 'interpersonal alienation' and issues arise around fear of rejection (Rokach, 2005).

Thomas et al.'s (2012) research which explored the key contributors to wellbeing for people who are homeless, found connecting to others was a critical component and essential to survival. They argued that people purposefully seek out opportunities to interact with other people and so maintain their wellbeing. This mirrors the model of Ryff and Keyes (1995), who found that in order to achieve wellbeing positive relationships with others was essential. Rudd's quality of life model (Ruud, 1997a) proposes that engaging in music is one way to make these connections, describing them as a 'door-opener' for people who have been isolated from society.

The ability to musically connect with others was evident in this study. Singer Rachel, who struggled to verbally communicate with the other singers, was able to interact and connect through song and even though she had struggled to make friends in the group she still described them as her family. This interaction mirrors the concept of communicative musicality (Malloch and Trevarthen, 2009) explored in Chapter 2. It describes the primary interaction between mother and infant, where communication is viewed as intrinsically musical, drawing on patterns of pulse, timing, gesture and timbre. This is a hard-wired primary means of connection (Procter, 2011), which enables 'co-ordinated companionship to arise' (Malloch, 1999, p.29). Proctor argues that for those who have experienced social exclusion, trauma or deprivation their communicative musicality has been 'compromised', but music-making with others can have a positive impact on repairing this basic connection and enable communication with others.

The singing groups play a fundamental role in supporting the singers who are homeless to negotiate and resolve confrontations. Proctor (2011) argues that the musical environment is a place to feel safe and take social risks, to make eye contact, to listen, respond appropriately and stay with challenging situations. The groups also help singers to develop the appropriate social skills to form meaningful relationships with others and these can result in a network of social support. Proctor (2011) has coined the term musical capital

to describe the ‘social reciprocation’ (p.13) that music making together can bring. Musical capital is an early form of social capital and describes people building networks of trust and cooperation for mutual benefit, that bring social support (Putnam, 1993; Procter, 2011) Developing social capital is especially advantageous for people who are disadvantaged or poor, bringing a reciprocated social resource (Field, 2008).

6.6 Belonging

The experience of being part of something and belonging is a fundamental social experience of being in the homeless singing groups, with singers reporting that ‘I just feel I belong’. The bond is created though the singers sharing life experiences and a mutual understanding of ‘collective adversity’. Belonging is an emotional investment in other people who share a collective understanding (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Feelings are reciprocal (Baumeister and Leary, 1995) and there is a sense of group cohesion and attraction (Marshall, 2002). It has been identified as a key aspect of participation in the choir literature: with singers comparing the experience to being like a community (Von Lob et al., 2010; Stewart and Lonsdale, 2016), a team (Livesey et al., 2012), a place to connect (Dingle et al., 2012) and an environment that allows social bonds to be formed (Einarsdottir and Gudmundsdottir, 2016).

Through exploring literature with vulnerable singers and those who have experienced homelessness, it appears that social interactions are more critical than for non-vulnerable singers. A study with choir members across England, Germany and Australia (Clift and Hancox, 2010), found that singers who identified as having low rates of psychological wellbeing, experienced the social support from the group to be particularly beneficial with addressing loneliness and isolation. This has also been replicated in a study comparing the impact of participating for singers who were homeless with middle class singers (Bailey & Davidson, 2005). The researchers found that for homeless singers, the sense of belonging to a group with others was a more important

aspect than for middle class singers. The vulnerable members placed a greater emphasis on supporting each other and acknowledged the pleasure in being together. Belonging has emerged as a key theme in all the qualitative research conducted with singers who are homeless. (Bailey and Davidson, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2005; Boal-Palheiros, 2017; Nordberg et al., 2018). Singers with experience of homelessness may arrive at groups presenting with 'social and psychological problems' (Boal-Palheiros, 2017, p.67) that are not apparent in groups with less vulnerable singers. They are also likely to be more socially isolated and excluded. The experience of belonging and the social capital that is enjoyed is particularly pertinent.

6.7 The Family

While the experience of belonging suggests a warm connection to others, the term 'family', which was also used throughout the interviews, implies a structure to the group and members fulfilling different roles. The metaphor of groups being like a family was a recurring theme through the data and the word was also referenced eighty-three times in the research with The Dallas Street Choir (Nordberg et al., 2018). It has been adopted by those seeking appropriate terminology to describe groups that offer emotional support and care between people who are not blood related. The term 'families of choice' (Dewaele et al., 2011) has been taken up by the LGBTQ community as have the terms 'fictive kin', or 'kinship group'. They describe the broad friendship networks and the support and companionship that might be expected from a family. The term has been adopted by teams of on-duty fireman; when the group function as a family and live and eat together, it brings increased motivation and less stress (Pillai and Williams, 2004). Research with gangs has found the same use of the term (White, 2009), with membership providing family-like support, solidarity and connections with others. Singer William's choir experience mirrored that of his gang experience. When talking about being a member of a gang he said, 'just to be, to feel part of something' and of his singing group 'I just felt part of something straight away'. These uses of

the term family implies more than just belonging but being part of an identified unit, bringing nurture and support and a social structure. In the example of the gangs a hierarchy is also implied in the use of the term family.

When interviewees described other people in the groups, they afforded them roles linked to family. Ange described herself as Chris' 'mam', Chris said his friend in the group was like his dad and singer Matt described the leaders as 'bad cop, good cop' inferring parental roles. This research has explored how the group leader takes on a disciplinarian role, which equates to the head of a family and the position of leadership. For some groups, family-like behaviour is demonstrated through the shared meal, where bonds are reinforced and strengthened, and the family identity is communicated (Cappellini and Parsons, 2012).

The relationships that people who are homeless have with their blood families can be complex and challenging (Snow and Anderson, 1993; Baum and Burnes, 1993; Toro, 2007). Participants in this study reported very poor experiences, which included a lack of safety and neglect as a child, sexual abuse, loss, rejection and domestic violence. Feelings of rejection continued to be experienced when families did not come to public concerts despite the singers 'forlorn hope' they would be there. These experiences around family link into the theoretical concept of family being a problematic term. Family implies a heterosexual two parent stereotype (Roseneil and Budgeon, 2004), which can be emotionally challenging for some groups that are disadvantaged and do not live up to the 'cornflakes packet' ideal (Morgan, 2011). Families are also linked to places of oppression, inequality, exploitation and hierarchy (Edwards et al., 2012). Family identity theory (Epp and Price, 2008) argues that family identities are constructed by defining the group structure and determining members and non-members, thus creating a hierarchy and power imbalance. It is interesting then that the term is appropriated by the groups and organisations to imply something positive and suggest support and

connection, an unrealistic ‘apple-pie’ view of community with its myth of ‘warm, nostalgic coziness’ (Ansdell, 2010a, p.42).

In fact, the groups in this study resemble the messy painful experiences of family, where relationships are complex and there is diversity (Ansdell, 2010a). In this respect describing the groups as a family is highly appropriate. The groups have been shown to have ‘hierarchies of belonging’ (May, 2011, p.369) and are not fully inclusive. Some people were welcomed temporarily into the family, such as the celebrities and arts professionals, who understand the codes and rules, demonstrate appropriate social behaviour and bring prestige. Others who do not adjust to the implicit rules are not welcomed. The reality of the groups is that they resemble the aspect of family that is a ‘fragile and complex mix of support, love and friendship, sitting alongside tensions, rivalries and challenging relationships’ (Ansdell, 2010a, p.51)

6.8 Benefits Beyond the Group

The social benefits that the singers reported, bring positive effects beyond the group. This chapter has explored how participating leads to social capital, where ‘trust, norms and networks’ (Putnam, 1994, p.63) are created through building social support (Procter, 2011). The singers enjoy a reciprocated social resource (Field, 2008), that is beneficial beyond the group as relationships move out of the sanctuary-like space and the world beyond, without the support of the group. Pete’s group members who had a home demonstrated this social network and invited other group members to stay on their sofa after a concert. This social support that group members foster, builds resilience (Cronley et al., 2018), which enables people who are homeless to adapt and cope with adversity, risk or change, and ‘bounce back’ (Rew et al., 2001). Resilience helps address feelings of hopelessness and loneliness and to enable people to feel more engaged with others. In the Dallas Street Choir (Cronley et al.,2018), resilience and social support helped singers who were homeless to make a successful positive shift towards independence (Cronley

et al., 2018) and in Bailey and Davidson's Canadian homeless choir, (2005) they found social inclusion enabled people who are transitioning out of homelessness to maintain a tenancy (Bailey and Davidson, 2005). People who are homeless seek feelings of 'normalcy' (Thomas et al., 2012), and the social interactions with other singers in a group helps to meet this need (Bailey & Davidson, 2005), enabling members to participate in 'normal life' (Thomas et al., 2012, p.780). This is an essential aspect of wellbeing (Ryff and Keyes, 1995) and contributes to improving quality of life of the members (Ruud, 1997a). The social benefits from participating in the groups may furnish singers with the tools to better manage challenging experiences of homelessness and support them to transition out of homelessness.

6.9 Conclusion

This chapter has considered the social and relational aspects of being in a singing group set up for people who are homeless. This population are socially isolated and struggle to form social networks so require appropriate opportunities to enable them to interact with people. Singing with others is the 'entrance ticket to a social group' (Ruud, 1997a, p.95). The groups provide a safe supported environment where people can negotiate and play with creating relationships, learning compromise and acceptance, skills that can be transferred. Similar life experiences help members form social connections and feel a sense of community and belonging (Thomas et al., 2012).

The interactions with people who are not group members, brings new social opportunities and creates space for people who are homeless to connect with a wider part of society, in a safe and managed environment. Increasing the social connections and support network enables singers to 'transcend their stigmatized identities' (Bell and Walsh, 2015, p.1982) and can have a positive impact on their wellbeing. The quality of life for the singers is improved by being socially active, building networks and enabling them to participate in society. Being in relationships leads to social support networks being formed

and increased social capital, which may be beneficial beyond the music-making space.

This chapter builds on the first theme, *Leave Your Shit* at the Door in Chapter 5, which argues that the group is a separate physical and emotional place, which removes singers into a safe sanctuary-like environment. This asylum creates the space for people to 'play' with and explore new relationships and new ways of being with others (DeNora, 2015). The following chapter, *Feeling Better Than When You Walked* In, explores the emotional wellbeing that singers experience though participating. It builds on the findings from this chapter, that forming new meaningful relationships and building social support contributes to wellbeing and quality of life.

Chapter 7 Feeling Better Than When You Walked In

This chapter explores the third broad theme that emerged from analysis of the UK data. It argues that participating in group singing creates the environment and opportunity for singers who are homeless to feel better about themselves, through being emotionally and mentally supported. The theme is explored through four sub-themes. The first, *Emotional and Mental Wellbeing* gives an overview of the mental health of the singers, before exploring the positive emotional and mental impact from participating. The second sub-theme examines *The Role of the Staff* in supporting emotional wellbeing. *The Impact of the Music*, is the third and looks at the role of music to bring about positive emotional benefits and the final sub-theme considers the temporal aspects of feeling better and explores *How Long Can These Feelings Last*? The findings will then be explored in relation to current literature and theory.

7.1 Emotional and Mental Wellbeing

Mental Health of Singers

People who are homeless have higher rates of common mental health issues, psychosis and personality disorders compared to the general public (Fazel et al., 2008; Rees, 2009; Pleace and Bretherton, 2013). Mental illness is recognised as both a cause of homelessness and a consequence (Rees, 2009) and the interviewees who experienced homelessness in this study reported high levels of poor mental health. Although they were not asked directly about their own health, when discussing their experiences of homelessness, eleven group members disclosed a mental health issue, with ten referring to a specific diagnosis and one referencing a mental health services she had accessed over many years, indicating an enduring condition. Two of the interviewees who were homeless, said they had been hospitalised, one had suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and another person had paranoia and psychosis. Three disclosed that they had attempted suicide, one

person was bi-polar and two talked about anxiety and the most common diagnosis was for depression. Of the two interviewees who did not refer to a specific mental health condition, one talked about feeling alone and isolated and scared to leave her house. The other did not refer to any mental health issues, but his interview was the most challenging to conduct. He struggled to maintain focus when answering questions, telling stories from his past life experiences, many of which I had heard when we had spoken on previous occasions. His behaviour suggested he was, in fact, managing a long-term mental health issue. One interviewee revealed her mental health conditions during the interview process. She had talked extensively about her experiences around mental illness, alcoholism, benefit fraud and homelessness, then later in the interview, she became anxious about what she had previously disclosed:

> Did I go into one too much when I was explaining my circumstances? When you asked about my housing, I just thought how I would explain how I ended up where I was. I didn't mean to go into one, I feel a bit paranoid now

A national audit of health in England in 2014 (Homeless Link, 2014) reported that 80% of people who experienced homelessness had reported some form of mental health issue. This figure is lower than the numbers of singers who reported having a mental health issue in this study (84.6%) and significantly lower than the number that I assumed had a mental health issue (92%), based on information from their interview. This raises the question of whether people who are homeless and have a mental health condition or are recovering from an illness, are specifically drawn to activities such as singing groups, in order to experience the positive emotional impact. The high prevalence of mental health among the interviewees gives some indication of their emotional fragility.

Benefits of Participating

Singers gave some indication of why attending the groups made them 'feel better' mentally and emotionally. The groups provide a sanctuary for those with mental health conditions, removing them from unpleasant experience or memories, whilst helping singers to forget. This theme was explored in detail in Chapter 5. Benson discussed the impact on his mental health when he said, 'when I start to thinking or when I'm depressed, stressed and start singing, I forget everything'. King, who suffers from depression, also experienced this effect, saying the groups allows you to 'get out of your head' and a place for 'forgetting the world'. A further cognitive benefit arises when the singers enters a mindful state of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997), becoming fully absorbed in the activity and released from mental anxiety. Anna explains the impact for her:

> you're just happy to be there and to sing and I think singing and music does that. It gets right out of all your problems and your anxieties and everything and puts you in that moment

More than just blocking or removing, the mental relief comes from the positive emotions that the singers experienced. They referred to emotional states such as, 'joy', 'feeling alive', 'happy', 'feeling human', 'feel better'. Singers mentioned heightened aroused states, such as an 'adrenalin burst' and being 'lifted', particularly when performing. The term 'buzz' was used frequently, with singers talking of an 'infectious buzz', the 'buzz of other members' and 'a 'buzz' experienced when the music 'clicks'.

There was an interesting connection made between singing in the groups and drug taking, with one comment, 'it's like drugs' and another 'this is better than drugs and I'm not killing myself with it'. There is a prevalence of drug overuse by people who experience homelessness (McNaughton, 2008), with street sleepers using substances to alter their emotions and improve their mood (Butchinsky, 2007). It could be argued that illegal drug use and singing fulfil a similar function, enabling a shift in mood and achieving a heightened aroused

state. Singer King made the connection between singing and his prescribed medication for depression. He said that if he stays at home and does not attend a session when he is particularly low, he gets more depressed and this leads to him needing more medication, which makes him feel numb. He said, 'I'm not upping my meds because you know the side effects and it takes your emotions away'. He chooses, therefore, to come to his group when he is having an episode of depression, even though he does not physically want to, and in this way uses the group to self-medicate. Claire, who suffers from anxiety and depression also struggled with feeling tired and motivating herself to attend but said 'I feel I have to force myself to get up and go, but the end result, I'm going 'cause I feel better after I've done rehearsals, make me feel better'.

Pete, the leader from CWNN gave a further example of how the group became a 'life-line' for his member. He spoke of a singer in his group who has attended every week for six years even when he is 'in the depths of depression'. Pete described how this singer joined in the session even though he was unable to sing:

> it's so important to him that he'll come and he'll just sit there, he won't join in the singing. He'll stand with the choir he doesn't you know, he doesn't sit in the corner he sits, stands with the choir and when I ask him to stand, he'll stand up and sit down. But he can't quite bring himself to open his mouth…if the choir wasn't there…when he's like in that sort of state, what would he do…we are quite an important lifeline

The regular structure of the weekly session, being with other people and engaging in music, has a positive impact on mental health symptoms. People are motivated to go to their groups, which reduces the need for medication, makes singers feel 'better' and offers a life-line. This is a significant positive effect and indicates that the groups are not just a distraction from mental health issues but can provide a therapeutic-like effect.

7.2 The Role of the Staff

The staff that work with the singing groups play a critical role in supporting the emotional and wellbeing of members. The previous chapter has outlined the three areas that the leaders and additional staff are responsible for: emotional care and support, enforcing rules and boundaries and enabling music participation. Where support staff were employed by SO and CWNN, their role was to help address issues not related to the music, but other leaders who worked alone were responsible for meeting all the needs of members. Celine, who did not have support staff, suggested that the non-musical issues had to be addressed and resolved before music making could progress.

The singers in this study reported that they experienced support for their mental and emotional health. They said they, 'cheer you up', 'help you emotionally', are 'helpful', they made singers 'feel at ease', 'care about everybody' and have 'patience' and 'understanding'. Bob, a Manchester singer recounted an incident when the support worker from her group was able to directly address a mental health issue. She was having paranoid thoughts that her flat was going to get burgled whilst attending a public concert with her SO group. She described the impact of the support workers assistance:

> he was absolutely brilliant, and it meant I could …stay with the performance and watch it 'til the end and had he not been there I would have probably had to go home

Clair, who suffered from depression and anxiety made a distinction between group members, who she described as 'people like us' and the staff who she described as 'normal'. Her term 'people like us' inferred that all the members were managing some mental or behavioural health issue and required special treatment. Clair said it was a prerequisite, that staff needed to be skilled and knowledgeable when working with group members as they may react inappropriately or aggressively if spoken to by someone who was unable to deal with a situation. She gave the example of an incident with a friend in her group. She said, a member of staff was:

> having a right go at him…he just lost it, he went mad and that's when I realised someone like him you have to probably explain it in a nice way, not shout and go because he react probably how I react somebody shouts at me, I'm going to react probably like that as well

When the two group leaders referred to the skills and qualities they felt were required for the job, they said, 'compassion for others', 'tolerance', 'understanding', 'always encouraging' and 'empathy'. Celine believed a deep understanding of the needs and circumstances of people who experience homelessness was required to fulfil her role successfully. These qualities reflect the emotional and mental support that singers require. Chapter 5 has explored how staff create a safe sanctuary-like space through enforcing rules and holding boundaries. The high bar 'in terms of how people are going to behave' that Pete expects and enforces in his group is another way that the staff support good mental health. By having behavioural expectations and consequences for breaking the rules, the singers are supported to maintain appropriate group behaviour in a safe supportive environment.

The group leaders inspire and influence the musical experience in each group. Staff from CWNN and SO spoke of the 'high artistic quality', being musically 'ambitious' and how they endeavoured to achieve, 'musical excellence' bringing singers out of their 'comfort zone'. By setting a high musical bar, singers are pushed out of their 'comfort zone'. SO's founder Matt observed that this is a 'really delicate balance because obviously you don't want to set someone up to fail…but you also don't want to, I think not challenge people'.

Both group leaders interviewed for this study were professional musicians and their own interests and background clearly influenced their modus operandi. The music drives their work, and they draw on their personal musical history to shape how they lead. Pete, a professionally trained chorister and choir leader who worked as choral director for prestigious churches, discussed his high expectations and how he stretches his singers to achieve musical excellence. His motivation was for them to become the best musical versions

of themselves. Celine, a professional trained folk musician and performer was an expert in the Kodaly method of music learning, which uses an interactive and collaborative approach. For Celine, her motivation was to develop the musicality of the singers, which would help them to develop essential life skills that could be transferred beyond the group.

Both approaches to teaching music have an impact on the emotional and mental wellbeing of singers. Celine's focus on developing the musicality of singers, led to improved concentration, better memory and building the singers confidence. Pete's approach was to push his singers musically to exceed their musical expectations, bringing an increase in self-esteem and a greater 'belief in self'. Both approaches endeavoured to improve confidence and self-esteem. Singer William indicated his shift in self-esteem through engaging in music. When talking about his experiences of being homeless and before he first joined the choir, he says he was 'really so low, I was a broken shell...self-esteem so low'. When discussing his group he says, 'being in a choir is so amazing and so good because you're part of something, you build your confidence and self-esteem from low, you keep building up' and Danny another singer concurred, saying the groups are 'giving them self-esteem back'.

The role of the staff is complex in meeting the overall wellbeing of their singers. They nurture and care for their group members support their mental health and are also are responsible for delivering the musical aspects. Their teaching approach also address the emotional wellbeing of singers. These roles are outlined in the Singing Leader Competency Model in Chapter 6.

7.3 The Impact of the Music

The music and songs draw singers into an emotional space. This section explores how the lyrics have a positive emotional effect: helping to acknowledge and release emotions, as well as validating and communicating

something of the singer's life and experiences. The group leaders play a key role in choosing the repertoire for their groups which impacts the emotional experience for their singers. Pete explored how singing particular lyrics can acknowledge and release emotions. He said:

> there is something very beneficial, very therapeutic in being able to just kind of enter into the emotion of that when you sing…if you just sit down and think about it you can't so easily

He gave an example of the emotional journey his singers went on when they sang an ABBA medley that he had arranged. The songs explored experiences such as the 'depths of human rejection', 'agonising stuff about break up', but then 'the pain will end' and 'dancing once again', ending the medley with a message of positivity and hope. Pete argued that this medley reinforced the message that singing can 'help me cope with everything' and that 'music gives us something to hold onto'. The lyrics allow singers to engage with and experience an emotion which is explored though the safety of the song.

Singers talked about their connection to some of the song choices that were particularly important to them. Mark, a group member from Manchester, discussed the profound emotional impact of singing *Never Walk Alone,* both for him and his fellow group members. The lyrics roused emotions in him and made him cry when he sang it at a performance. He said the message he took from the song was 'you're not by yourself, you got people with you to help you'. William, another singer, discussed the impact of singing *Something Inside So Strong* at the first With One Voice event at the Royal Opera House. He said:

> it explains itself, something inside so strong, you don't need to explain more it's a song that eh makes you feel that, it's a fighting song, because it's you're fighting to be good… even though hard times

Clair claimed she was not aware of her own emotions until they were explored through song, saying, 'cause like I don't know my emotions and that, when I

singing is like, you know'. The lyrics of a song acknowledge and validate the singer's emotions within a safe context, enabling them to connect deeper to their sense of self. Clair strongly identified with the song *Another Day in Paradise,* which tells the story of a woman experiencing homelessness being ignored on the street. She said she wanted to cry when the group performed it, saying, 'I get very emotional when it has a meaning, especially if it kind of relates to me'. Celine discussed singing the Billy Connelly's song, *I Wish I Was in Glasgow*, with her group, which led to a song writing session. Members added their own verses about their memories of growing up in Glasgow. The original lyrics included:

> I was born in Glasgow, in the centre of the town
> I'd take you there and show you, but they've pulled the old place down
> And when I think about it, it always makes me frown

Celine said of this experience:

> even people who <u>have</u> maybe mentioned that they've had really unhappy em (.) *childhoods,* were still happy to talk about (.) like places that they remembered, and you could see that they got a *lot* out of that

The songs that validated the emotions and life experiences of the singers had extra significance at a performance. Group member William placed great importance on the singers connecting to the emotional content of a song and concluded that a successful performance was when you were able to transfer that emotion across to the audience. This signified a 'good show'. Singer Claire, from London, recognised that the songs had the potential to send 'a message to the people'. She was frustrated as she struggled to communicate with people generally and often felt misunderstood. However, when she sang, she said it was 'easier expressing it in singing, tell the story in the singing'.

Clair also spoke about how singing had an impact on her identity, through her imagining she was the famous person singing the song. She said:

> your just like this different person that you wanna be like…I might want to be like Lauryn Hill or something just like different character …it's got this image this dream, wanna be like this person erm so I always wanted to be a singer when I was younger …I keep imagining what it would be like if I was this person

Through imagining she was Lauryn Hill, she connects back to positive aspirations she had as a child and through embodying a famous singer, she presents a successful positive version of herself.

Only two interviewees talked about emotional aspects of music beyond the lyrical or story content. William a singer said, 'the music was beautiful that I forgot about my problems for an hour maybe an hour and a half' and Pete, a group leader talked about how melody enhances the emotion.

7.4 But How Long Can These Feelings Last?

Singers and staff recognised the positive emotional and mental impact that group singing brought for participants and this final theme considers the longevity of the effect. It explores how long the singers stay in these transformed states and whether an embodied change can be sustained beyond the session or performance.

Group staff gave some specific examples of where participants had experienced emotional and mental benefits which might be transferrable beyond the session. Pete spoke about one singer who arrived at his group shy, nervous and 'timid as a mouse'. Through the process of giving her more exposure in the choir and pushing her musically to take solos at performances, she grew in confidence, giving her 'something to be proud of' and feeling valuable in the group. This confidence was then mirrored beyond the music-making and observed in her interactions with other members at the meal and during the breaks. She was more relaxed and increased her social interaction with others and Pete said, 'I think the one sort of feeds into the other'. SO founder Matt, talked about the wider impact on the individual when challenges

are overcome and goals are achieved in the group, particularly at performances. He argued that it brings a positive impact on the life of the singer beyond the group, as the 'next challenge is lower'. Singer Mark supported this view saying that if singers can meet their goals and achieve something in the singing groups, then 'we can do it outside as well'.

Singers speculated on how often they would need to sing in order to sustain the positive impact beyond the group. For Anna, she felt like she needed the group 'every day for nine hours', if she was to enjoy the long-term benefits saying, 'I feel so at peace and for that while couple of hours…everything just goes for that while…for a few hours…and then reality sinks back in'. She implied the benefits only lasted whilst she attended. Singer Clair, whose group met in the evening, observed the positive effect remained for the rest of the day and 'the next day…it's just it's back to reality again'. For Bob, participating brought tangible benefits that directly impacted her day. She said,

> you can leave that shit behind for a couple of hours and if you have to, pick it up afterwards. But sometimes if you've got mental health 90% of it is in your head and you don't have to pick the shit up, you know, you can carry on with your day and feel positive and do something else… it's a good momentum it starts off the day like then you can go swimming ….it makes you productive

Bob indicates how the therapeutic benefits have a positive effect on her life beyond the session and attending enables her to engage in other wellbeing activities. She also implies that the sanctuary-like state that is created in the group, through leaving her 'shit at the door', can be transferred out into the rest of Bob's life. The safe asylum does not have boundaries and is not confined to the session. Bob implies that singers with mental health issues have a choice about whether they to go back and engage with the 'shit' or stay in a place of emotional wellbeing when they leave the session.

Two interviewees discussed the groups having to break over the holidays which they felt was a challenge for other members. Chris said, 'I understand

why people don't like long breaks because some people suffer from depression like myself um some people don't go out until Streetwise'. He said that he played the guitar and wrote songs giving him another musical outlet, which made the holidays easier. Anna's group had a break for two months over the summer and she said, 'it's quite difficult not having the singing but we've got [mental health support project] and we sing in a group there'. They both saw the break over the holidays as a challenge, particularly for those who did not have any other musical opportunities. It is interesting that they both talked about the impact of the music in terms of having a break, but they did not discuss the relationships or mention whether they would miss the other singers. The need for there to be regularity in these groups seems to be an important aspect. Chris and Anna identified how hard it was for other singers during the group holidays and Clair and Anna both said they only experienced the positive emotional benefits on the days when the groups ran. While this reinforces the positive impact that participating in the group brings it also highlights the need for consistency around the groups. Chapter 5 has already referred to the issues of sustaining funding for this work in order to keep groups running. Anna's group had to stop six months after her interview due to funding issues.

Summary

This chapter has explored the singing groups being a place of emotional and mental wellbeing, where there is a positive shift from attending. The founder of CWNN, Marie, talked of her participants 'feeling better than you were when you walked in' and singer King summed it up when he said, 'I feel good when I leave'. Singers reported feelings of happiness, being in a positive aroused state, able to block out troubling thoughts and increase their self-esteem. The positive emotional state is achieved in part through the support from the staff, who can help address specific mental illness issues. The music also impacts emotional wellbeing and engaging with lyrics enables singers to explore and release emotions, whilst helping to acknowledge and honour life experiences. These lead the singer to engage more deeply with their sense of self. It is

important to note that only singers who joined and committed to the singing groups were interviewed for this research. Therefore, the findings may give an overly positive impression of the emotional and mental effects.

The findings from this chapter build on the concept that the group is a sanctuary and removes and separates singers from the 'shit' of homelessness, explored in Chapter 4. It is within this safe asylum, where singers have left the issues around homelessness at the door, that they are open to receiving support and improving their emotional and mental wellbeing.

Discussion

This discussion will consider three areas that have emerged from the findings in this chapter and explore them in relation to relevant literature and theory. It proposes that the singing groups create an ideal environment for people who are vulnerable to explore and reconcile emotions. This enables singers to connect deeply to their sense of self and reconcile their homeless identity, through constructing a musical identity. Participating in the groups brings therapeutic-like outcomes and has a positive impact on health and wellbeing.

7.5 The Issue of Emotions

This research has found that by singing with others, people who are homeless were able to connect and explore their emotions. One of the main reasons that people engage in music is for 'some sort of emotional experience' (Juslin and Sloboda, 2001, p.3) as it brings a greater awareness of emotions, in both how we experience them and also how they are expressed (1997b). The positive 'emotional benefits' of singing with others has been found widely in the research around choirs with non-vulnerable singers (Clift and Hancox, 2001), but is more widely discussed in research with singers who are vulnerable or disadvantaged. Singers in a prison choir said participation brought them emotional stability (Cohen, 2009), while singers who had

experienced an adverse life event, reported their group helped them to manage difficult emotions and increase positive emotions (Von Lob et al., 2010). People who sang in a choir and experienced chronic pain said participating replenished their emotional wellbeing every time they sang together (Hopper et al., 2016) and women with post-natal depression said being in their group enhanced positive emotions (Perkins et al., 2018).

The positive impact of group singing for people who are homeless has been found in other research, which mirrors the findings of this study. Singers reported that participating led to experiencing positive emotions (Bailey and Davidson, 2003; Dingle et al., 2012). There was also more self-awareness of positive and negative emotions (Bailey and Davidson, 2003; Rio, 2005; Dingle et al., 2012) and singers were better equipped to regulate and manage their emotions (Dingle et al., 2012). The space becomes a safe place for this emotional exploration because of the skills of the group leader, who can specifically respond to the singer's moods and emotional needs (Perkins et al. 2018). Singing also offers the flexibility for tailoring a session and adapting to a group (Dingle et al., 2012). Singing with others can bring an experience of emotional healing (Nordberg et al., 2018) and this is pertinent for people who are homeless and have experienced trauma, loss and rejection. It is also especially important as this population struggle to form healthy relationships and lack the social support networks of friends and family.

7.6 Engaging with the Self and Identity Work.

Singing brings opportunities for members to explore and reconcile their emotions and connect more deeply to their sense of self (Hassan, 2017). Engaging with the emotions and the story in the lyrics is a particularly useful technique for facilitating biographical work (Magee, 2017). This connects the singer to memories, emotions and aspirations from their past, present and future. When singers who are homeless connect with the lyrics, they are afforded a safe opportunity to see their lives, their dreams and losses in a new

light (Boal-Palheiros, 2017). In this study, Clair tapped into the emotions of rejection when she sang *Another Day in Paradise*. For Mark, singing *Never Walk Alone,* reinforced that he is no longer by himself, but has social support While when William sang *Something Inside so Strong* it reinforced his determination never to give up. By connecting to their life experiences and acknowledging emotions they are validating and accepting themselves (Iliya, 2011), confirming what they have experienced and re-affirming a sense of self. In this way the singers are projecting themselves into their songs (DeNora, 2015). This deep connection to the singer's life experience, acknowledges their 'emotional core' (Magee, 2017) and creates a way for them to both explore and express an authentic version of themselves (Davidson and Faulkner, 2010).

Through engaging deeply with the self, the singers can reconcile their stigmatised homeless identity and explore new ways of presenting themselves. Homeless identity was explored in Chapter 3 and describes the socially imposed identity created largely by the media, who present an image of vulnerability, victimhood and criminality (McCarthy, 2013). It is not constructed by the people experiencing the condition themselves. This stigmatised stereotype can be absorbed and then performed (Butler, 1990) and has a negative impact on a person's sense of self and influences how they see their place within the wider community (McCathy, 2013). When people who are homeless become devalued by the dominant culture and are unable to resist the stigma, it leads to experiences of self-hatred and low self-esteem (Taylor, 1994; Fraser, 2000). Snow et al., (1994) observed that people who are homeless begin to disengage from their sense of self when placed in this demeaning social context. Therefore, rejecting or reconciling the homeless identity and connecting to the self is crucial to wellbeing (Thomas et al., 2012).

Identities are not stable but are 'performative and social' (Hargreaves et al., 2017, p.4), evolving through interactions with other people (Hargreaves et al., 2002) and are formed in relation to things beyond the person: their social

ecology (DeNora, 2017b). Making music with others is an especially good environment for identity construction; it 'provides a forum in which we construct and negotiate our constantly evolving sense of who we are, and our place in the world' (MacDonald et al., 2017, p.v). All engagement in music is essentially 'an identity project' (MacDonald et al., 2017, p.v), which Rudd (2017a) argues allows people to construct and stabilise their identity, helping to define who they are and their position in society. When people who are homeless sing together, they can perform biographical work and begin to construct an identity based on their roles in music, such as singers and performers. There is a sense then that the musicians can 'play' with who they want to be when they participate in the singing groups (DeNora, 2015). They can explore, steal, borrow different identities (DeNora, 2017b), negotiate where they want to belong (Ruud, 1987) and choose a new way of being in the world (DeNora 2015, p.43). The singing groups in this respect are 'temporary imaginary worlds' (Boal-Palheiros, 2017, p.14) and bring space and time separate from real life to explore alternative possibilities for who they want to be. Clair illustrated this well when she imagined she was the successful international singer song writer, Lauryn Hill, whilst she was singing.

This musical persona is reinforced through the social interactions with others in the group and through performing and being witnessed (Ansdell, 2010b) and validated by the audience (Goffman, 1968). The new 'able' (Magee, 2002) identity is absorbed by the singers and reflects how they see themselves as well as how they are made to be seen by other people (McCarthy, 2013, p.54). It challenges this spoiled and damaged identity (Goffman, 1968; Magee, 2002) associated with homelessness (McCarthy, 2013) and brings feelings of self-worth (Charmaz, 1987; Snow and Anderson, 1987). This has a positive impact on wellbeing and quality of life, enabling the musician to regulate emotions and bringing more possibilities for action, agency and self-efficacy (Ruud, 2017c).

7.7 Singing Groups as Places of Therapy

Singing groups can create the environment for members to experience a therapeutic-like effect and are 'excellent spaces through which health and wellbeing can be promoted' (Higgins and Willingham, 2017, p.108). Participating in the groups supports good mental health, enables singers to reconcile and challenge emotions and evokes positive feelings such as happiness. Some singers experience a heightened aroused state that resembled taking drugs and one singer reported using singing in the place of medication for his depression. People who are homeless experience some of the worst health concerns in society (Homeless Link, 2014) and the experience of disadvantage, poverty and deprivation have been shown to have a negative impact on wellbeing and health (Cummins, 2013). This population are poor at engaging with health services (*Homeless Link*, 2014). The singers in this study are taking control of their own health and wellbeing in a safe and supported environment, by freely making the choice to attend these groups. By engaging in music, people 'regain control' of their lives and it creates the environment where they can care for themselves (DeNora, 2007). This is supported by MacDonald et al. (2013) who argue that feeling well 'is to some extent in our own hands'. (p.6) and by attending the groups, singers are choosing to support their wellbeing. They demonstrate their agency, an opportunity which is often denied for people who are homeless (Thomas et al., 2012).

A therapeutic-like effect was observed with all the Bailey and Davidson's choir research (2001, 2002, 2003, 2005) These 'clinical-type benefits' included emotional healing, a cathartic effect, emotional awareness and introspection. They argued that 'group singing in a non-clinical environment can effect positive outcomes with connotations similar to therapy, in a clinical setting (2002, p.27). The singing groups are not promoted to offer therapy, but some of the outcomes are similar.

The success of the singing groups to improve wellbeing is in part dependent on the skills, knowledge and experience of the group leader to facilitate the

activities and introduce relevant repertoire. The leader draws on their 'Swiss Army Knife' (Higgins, 2012) tools, to meet the emotional and health needs of the group. Ruud suggests that music leaders might better be described as 'Health Musicians' (2013). Here the question of the skills, experience and function of the leader is important, and comparisons between community musicians and music therapists is useful. Professionally they are very separate practises. Music therapists are trained using a specific methodology and enter into a professional clinical relationship with a group of 'clients' (Ansdell, 2014). The work, however, can be delivered in a community setting and the term Community Music Therapy has been coined to describe this group music making, with its focus on health prevention and promotion. Community music describes the groups from this study and has already been explored in Chapter 2. It is less theoretically based than music therapy, without formal training and with more fluid boundaries. Yet community music has clinical-type outcomes (Bailey and Davidson, 2002; 2003; 2005) as this study has shown, being the 'integration of social, education, medical and therapeutic practices' (Macdonald et al., 2013, p.9). Even though community music is not therapy and can only claim therapeutic-like outcomes, Ansdell (2014), who coined the term community music therapy has argued that this form of music therapy practice could sit within the field of community music. The findings from this study mirror many of the outcomes of community music therapy and the skills and competencies of music therapists.

7.8 Conclusion

The singing groups are a place of sanctuary that are separate and removed from the experiences of homelessness and within this safe asylum, singers can experience positive emotional and therapeutic-like outcomes. This is an important issue for people who are vulnerable and may have experienced trauma but have little opportunity to seek nurturing experiences. The singers experience emotional and mental support from the staff, particularly the group leader, who plays a critical role in enabling these outcomes for the members.

The music and song choices also contribute to the emotional wellbeing of singers. Through engaging with the lyrics, they can examine difficult experiences in their life and validate important lessons that they have learnt through homelessness. Emotions can be safely explored though the medium of song and this enables singers to connect to a deeper sense of self and play and explore with new ways of being. People who are homeless can embody and absorb the stigma of the homeless identity which has a negative impact on wellbeing. This 'spoiled', damaged identity (Goffman, 1968), prevents people from performing other 'able' identities (Magee, 2002a) and having agency and control over their future. Singers, however, can challenge their socially imposed negative homeless identity and construct a new musical identity through singing in their groups and project a positive and possible future self (Markus and Nurius, 1986). The groups also create an opportunity for people who are homeless who take control of aspects of their health and self-medicate. This is especially pertinent for a population whose health is poor. Participating improves wellbeing, through bringing emotional and mental health benefits and through constructing a positive able identity.

Chapter 8 You're Going to Notice Me

This chapter examines the fourth and final theme from the UK data, examining performances as significant events in the life of the groups and exploring the meaning they have for singers. It considers the positive impact they have on relationships between singers and the heightened emotional states that they induce. The interaction with the audience is discussed and how this opportunity to interact with the public leads to critical identity work. However, these public events bring challenges for the singers, staff and organisations.

The main theme is explored through three sub-themes. *Icing on the Cake* looks at performances as a special and particular event that are separate to the weekly singing session and can induce positive emotional states. The challenges that arise for the staff and singers are considered. *Impact on Relationships* looks at the implications of singers spending time together and how this leads to singers forming a tight bond. The final sub-theme is *Visibility and Recognition, which* explorers the increased exposure that the singers experience from performing and how their music identity is validated. The findings from the data are then discussed through examining current research and literature**.**

8.1 Icing on the Cake

Performances are special and unique events in the life of the singing groups. They exist in a time and location that is beyond the regular session space and these events are a transition, from safety from the private and the asylum-like space of the session, to a public domain. They can become a focal point for the groups, with singers 'eager to perform', with 'absolute joy', where 'everyone gives 100%'. Leader Celine said about her group, 'they *do* like performing in front of people' and Pete recognised the 'lack of shame and just kind of totally going for it' with his singers. The performers themselves spoke of the emotional impact on the audience. They witnessed the applause and the

standing ovations and were very aware of their emotional reaction, when people were ‘sitting crying’ during the show and that there was ‘not a dry eye in the house’.

When the history of the groups was explored in the interviews, it was the performances that marked the highlights for the singers from SO, CWNN and the Lodging House Mission Choir. This was particularly noticeable for those that had been involved in any performance that was high profile or brought prestige. For SO members in Manchester, the event that was discussed in most detail was the high profile show, The Passion. It included a professional choir and opera performers and was performed live to hundreds of people and was televised nationally. For singer William, the performance that had the most significant impact was the opera he had written in partnership with Scottish Opera, called *Who Killed John King*. This was explored in Chapter 1. He could remember the exact dates in 2012 of the performances in Glasgow and spoke vividly about performing at the Royal Opera House, saying ‘what a feeling’ and ‘I want that really bad. It was just amazing; how can I get to do something like that again?’. Performances that were particularly prominent were talked about as if they were recent events. Jim the non-singer based at the Lodging House Mission spoke about the Royal Opera House concert saying ‘aye, they wouldn’t shut up about it’, indicating how the story of this prestigious trip had been recounted through the day centre.

Different types of performances were discussed by groups members. For Anna, her group were only involved in more intimate events, small ‘wee sort of concert’, which she favoured as it ‘wasn’t a threatening atmosphere’. She said of the audience, ‘there wasn’t like 100’s of them’ and ‘you could still be yourself’. CWNN singers and staff discussed concerts that were closed events, which involved singing for private organisations, where, members were not permitted to bring friends along. Staff selected concerts to maximize the positive outcomes and ‘benefits’ for singers. Marie summed up the importance of concerts saying they give the groups a ‘sense of direction’ and are the ‘icing

on the cake', implying they bring focus to the weekly sessions and provide a goal for the groups to work towards.

Emotional Impact

When the interviewees discussed performances, they explored the positive emotional effects experienced. These public concerts were opportunities for singers to take on the role of the giver, a positive persona incongruous to the stigmatising experience of the homeless identity. Performers shifted from being labelled a person in need, vulnerable and dependant on others to an identity associated with someone who contributes and meets the needs of others. Pete said that at a concert it is the singers that 'have got the good stuff' and they want to 'share it' with the audience. William said it was his responsibility to the give the audience 'a good show' and 'a good time' and Danny said that 'when we come to the performance everyone gives 100%' and singers are responsible for making the audience 'feel part of the show'. The members enjoyed seeing the response of the audience and knowing that their music had been well received. Rachel believed her performance could 'make people happy', while Ange spoke of how they 'enjoyed it as much as we did' and Benson said his singing made 'others feel happy'. The concerts are an opportunity for the power dynamic to shift. Here it is the singers who are homeless who have the authority and the influence.

Other positive emotions that emerged from the performances were having a sense of achievement and pride. Danny observed that group members 'have never really achieved a lot' before they joined their group, while Matt the SO founder noted that people who are homeless have few opportunities 'to show their achievements', being told they are 'rubbish and they're not good enough'. Concerts brought opportunities to succeed. Singer Chris was asked to sing a solo at a performance the week after he first attended a SO session and said, 'I didn't think I had a voice or anything, but I must have done if he asked us to do a solo'. Singer William experienced pride through the response of the audience at his first concert, where the audiences were 'blown away' by the

performance and he ‘got a standing ovation’. Staff member Ree recognised the sense of achievement through observing her singers, saying they were ‘very proud of what they do and want to do it right’. Pride was also linked to the ‘beautiful venues’ where performances took place, which brought ‘kudos’ and ‘prestige’.

There was an additional emotional charge at concerts that was not present at the sessions. For Pete, he said his singers ‘always exceeded themselves’ and gave ‘the best performance’. Celine however, noted how nerves affected her singers, which led to them ‘forgetting their lines, forgetting to come in’. The ‘buzz’ from singing together in the session has been discussed in Chapter 7, but it seems to be heightened at performance. Interviewees spoke of the ‘buzz’ of ‘seeing the reaction’ of the audience when expectations are exceeded, or when the audience know ‘you are singing well’, and Celine felt this positive aroused state was ‘quite an addictive feeling’. Singers spoke about how they felt after the concerts, with Danny referring to the ‘adrenaline burst’ following the event and William speaking of being on a ‘high’ after the Royal Opera House concert.

Performances could lead to singers experiencing heightened emotional states: positive mood, pride, achievement and self-esteem the increased status of being the givers not the receivers. This made the singers feel special and important and singer Matt summed this up when he says, ‘everyone got a buzz, it went really really well and we felt really really wanted and felt really special for that night.’

Benefits of Performances Beyond the Group

Emotional benefits were experienced during performances, but for some singers there was an additional positive impact outside the group. SO founder Matt referred to this when he spoke about how his singers had to overcome hurdles at performances and push ‘themselves in a particular way which means the next challenge is a bit lower’. He said his singers felt, ‘if I can do

this what else can I achieve in my life'. SO member Mark, echoed this idea when he talked about meeting goals, he said 'we know if we do it in Streetwise, we can do it outside as well'. For Singer William, singing at the Royal Opera House proved to be something of a catalyst in integrating him into his community. He was determined to move on from using homeless services and leave the day centre where his singing group was based and access other local arts facilities. On returning from London, he joined a community choir, and from there he also became involved in acting and performing with a local theatre group. William spoke openly of the transformational impact of being involved in performances when he discussed looking at photographs from events he had been involved with that he kept on a wall by his bed. During a suicidal episode he said, 'I just didn't want to wake up anymore…really so close just to end it, to put me out of this pain'. However, he said, 'I looked at eh some old photies…I don't know what it was, but just something said to me, I can't do it.' The performances can play a critical role for some singers and affect their sense of self, leading to positive outcomes beyond the group.

Challenges and tensions around performances

Performances brought additional work and issues for the organisations. While the concerts enabled the members to feel special, for those involved in organising them they could bring additional work and extra expense. Transport was one consideration that had to be addressed as well as sourcing the funds to pay staff costs and give 'members expenses', which were paid by CWNN and SO to singers coming to a performance. A balance had to be found between the number of requests to sing and the number of performances given. Marie, CEO, spoke of how the organisations looked at the 'benefits of each individual performance' and not all requests were met. Ree from SO, said of her Middlesbrough groups:

> I get e mails and requests for performances all the time…we're not just performing, a performing group…we try and do one that links into our work and our overall thread of why we do it

Marie said that sometimes the performance programme could get overly full and ‘gets a bit nuts’, putting increased demand on the organisation.

The lead up to performances were a critical time, when the group environment could be adversely affected. An example of this was seen with the SO Opera Hour performances, which founder Matt said had more money invested in them than usual events and the ‘artistic standard is a notch higher’. The concert raised some in-group issues for the Middlesbrough SO group, and achieving higher musical standards for the event, put more pressure on staff and singers. A newly composed piece of opera was included in the set list, which had been challenging to learn and had dominated the rehearsals. This ‘changed the shape of things’ and the atmosphere in the group, according to Charlie the support worker and there was less spontaneity. He noticed the leaders were more stressed which had a negative impact on the atmosphere in the group. Some group members were resistant to the newly composed piece and they requested that their favourite group song, *This Little Light of Mine* was included, but this had been rejected, bringing frustration for some singers during the sessions.

There were also challenges for staff around finding harmony between balancing the aspects of performing that were ‘daunting’ and made singers feel very nervous and anxious, and the sense of pride and achievement that member feel by being pushed ‘out of their comfort zone’. This tension is touched on by SO’s founder, Matt when he said, ‘I think that is a really delicate balance, because obviously you don’t want to set someone up to fail’. Performing a solo was a time when many singers spoke about being nervous. Rachel talked of her ‘stress’ before her first solo and singer King said, ‘everyone gets nervous’. However, leader Pete said that solos ‘can be an amazing way of boosting people’s confidence’. He talked of how he got a sense of ‘when people are ready for it’, starting someone off on something ‘quite safe’ like a solo line or duet before they are given a longer more exposing passage. For one singer in CWNN, being given a solo was a catalyst for her

gaining more confidence in the group, and it led to her engaging more with other members both during the session and at the shared meal. Singer Bob spoke of her experience being asked to do a solo in The Passion:

> yeah, it was fantastic, I mean I was really chuffed when they asked me to do a solo, although it was only one line it was a very poignant line you know, it was a very special moment for me

The solos generally are a 'highly charged' element of the performance for group leader Pete. They increased the recognition and visibility of some of the group giving them 'status' which helped 'put them on the map' and brought additional confidence.

However, he said there were times when he wished they were not such a prominent element of CWNN groups as they singled out individuals, giving them additional 'glory', making 'stars' of one person, overlooking the work and commitment of all the other singers. Solos also could be a source of tension and jealousy between group members. He was also frustrated by the audience response to solos during the performance, saying:

> I'm not that keen on everyone clapping as someone gets up and does a solo…I tend to discourage that…for me it kind of A) interrupts the song and B) it kind of makes out that it's all about the soloist. You know, why aren't you applauding the choir every time they do a really good chorus?

Individual singers had to overcome personal challenges for performances. King, a singer with dyslexia, spoke of his personal issues around performances, saying 'learning lyrics is *quite difficult* for me, it's very stressful' and that his group leader has a 'strict rule' that lyric sheets cannot be used at a concert. He carried his lyrics round with him all the time outside of his sessions and would 'look at them every now and then' to help him remember the words. Single mum and singer Rachel from SO raised another issue around child-care and performances. Managing her toddler son and his needs when extra rehearsals were timetabled for a performance, left her feeling 'worried' and fearful of him being awake and disruptive at the rehearsals

saying, ‘I can’t leave him even two minutes, maybe he do something’. Performances bring challenges for singers, both negotiating their place within the group and managing their personal situations outside of the group.

The performances are special events that are marked out as separate to the rest of the session, however they bring challenges for the singers and the staff and management within organisations, as they bring additional work, costs and tensions. The group leaders play an important role in bridging the gap between the expectations of the organisations and the singers in the group. Despite the challenges, they are a significant part of the life for some of the groups and can bring positive emotional benefits. Singers report an aroused heightened state and emotions linked to a sense of achievement, pride and self-esteem.

8.2 Impact on Group Relationships

Performances required the group members to work together to achieve a goal. This allegiance brings the members emotionally closer together and their increased cohesion and bond were observed by the staff. Staff member, Ree, observed that singers ‘solidify as a team’ and Matt talked of the ‘togetherness’. Marie supported this saying, ‘it’s the same with any group isn’t it, you spend more time with each other then you bond better’ and she felt that the bonding came from having a ‘shared experience’. Celine reinforced the team effort saying there was a ‘hole’ when a singer was absent from a concert. The singers supported each other during and after each concert. Celine noted that assistance was given by other singers in the group if lyrics were forgotten or entrances were missed. King spoke of the support that was given to a singer after a concert if someone felt they had not performed well, ‘oh I slipped up on such and such…nobody said anything…so you’ve got to gather round and eh let them know that it was ok and *have another go*’. They also congratulated each other after a show, with King saying, ‘you’re patting everyone on the back, they’re patting you on the back’ and Danny said, ‘everyone’s applauding, and you just look around at each other and shake someone hand or give them a

hug'. When Danny said, 'we nailed that, we done it', he indicated that the achievement was enjoyed on behalf of the group and not just the individual.

Singer Matt felt that spending more time together as a group around performances had a positive impact on relationships as they 'trusted each other more'. He changed his mind about one of his leaders after a performance, describing him as 'one of us'. He also altered his impression of another singer after rehearsing for The Passion and observed that because the group 'had loads more time' together, this other member 'opened up' and shared personal information about his mental health issues with the rest of the group. As a result, Matt felt more tolerant towards his behaviour and attitude when they were back in the weekly session.

While the performances can mark the key milestones in the life of the groups, both Matt and Marie who founded organisations were clear about the importance of the weekly session, implying that this was more significant than the performances. Through meeting each week, singers built their sense of 'community' and reinforced social networks in the group. This bond then enabled the singers to engage in the riskier behaviour of performing. The CWNN Code of Conduct suggested this when it stated:

> We understand that if we want to perform at gigs, as a minimum, we need to attend the last rehearsal before the performance and at least one other rehearsal in the run up to it

The performances are a big incentive for some singers to attend a group, but they sit within an overall programme and are possible because of the relational work that happens at the weekly session. Matt, SO's founder, was passionate that performances 'can't be the be all and end all' and that the 'legacy' of each group must be maintained through a consistent weekly timetable. The weekly session creates and strengthens the social bonds and provides the space for social rules to be established and reinforced, as Chapter 5 explored. The

relational work that happens in the session is critical so that the singers are enabled to transition out into a public space of the performance.

8.3 Visibility and Recognition

When the singers perform, they enter into a relationship with the audience. Across the data, interviewees gave accounts of the positive feedback they experienced and a sense of being validated through applause and 'standing ovations'. This may explain why some members were so 'hungry' and 'eager' for the opportunity to perform. Public concerts brought the opportunity for positive interaction with audience members. Mark talked about speaking to people from the audience after a show and said 'a couple of them had pictures took with us'. Singer Matt referred to the soap star celebrities who came to see his performance, chatted to the singers and then attended the after-show party. King spoke of the 'entertainment business-people' who came to the performances. This positive endorsement and acknowledgement from the audience, increased the singer's sense of being visible and accepted. However, these interactions were largely with strangers and leader Pete wondered if this was a 'bittersweet' experience for singers, 'giving your all for people you don't know'. William was one singer who did talk of his friends seeing him when he appeared on television and in the newspaper in relation to a performance, saying, 'my phone was going right through the roof…they realised what I wanted, I've got purpose…acting and the choir as well'. William's friends acknowledged and accepted his new artistic persona

Increased exposure and visibility of the singers was evident when the press was involved in promoting a show. Singers spoke of being interviewed and appearing on television and in the newspaper. For the SO Manchester singers who appeared in the televised version of The Passion, their visibility was nationwide. Singer Matt was asked to speak about his experience of being involved in the The Passion on BBC news and he made a joke saying it felt like 'when City won the league and Aguilar scored that goal to make it 3 – 2 to

City…that's the way it feels'. For singer Andy his face was the image that advertised The Passion and he said, 'oh I was the poster boy yeah, I was asked if I minded and they showed me some proofs, no prob, no big deal'. His face was visible across all the publicity material. The singers became more visible and could be identified as members when they wore organisational branded t-shirts of CWNN and SO. Danny described them as a 'badge' and Pete said, 'it's that ownership thing, you know being identified um you know having a kit that you wear for gigs'. The same t-shirts were worn by singers and staff and were an equaliser during performance, helping to 'symbolically level out social differences' (Boal-Palheiros, 2017) and signifying a sense of belonging and group visibility.

Public concerts were an opportunity for people who are homeless to be noticed. William was very motivated by this attention saying, 'look at me' and 'I just want to be noticed'. Pete suggested singers wanted to be seen and validated because they have now something to offer and a reason to be heard:

> in life they are so used to being at the bottom of the pile and being pushed aside, um being ignored, being told you know, they're rubbish and they're not good enough and they're falling through the net and they can't get this and they can't get that um because that's a norm. When they're on stage and they've got something they're proud of um to share, er it says it's a very very small window for them to say, 'hey everyone look at me, I'm good'…I'm ignored most of my life er but now you're not going to ignore me you're going to notice me

For people who are routinely ignored and overlooked, the concerts brought an opportunity to be heard. Chapter 7 has explored how lyrics can testify to the singer's life experience and allow them to explore and acknowledge emotions. Through singing these songs then in a public space, the audience hear and witness the person's life experience, and this adds an emotional charge to the performance. Mark spoke of crying when he performed, *You'll Never Walk Alone:*

> You listen to the words really carefully, it just got you, it just get to your eyes…they say like you're not by yourself, you got people with you, to help you, so yeah, and I think that's why both of us cried

Performances by SO and the Lodging House Mission Choir include spoken pieces where singers talked about their life and challenging experiences and Celine noted 'it's another wee platform for their voice to be heard'. While some singers craved the exposure and visibility of a public performance or press involvement, for other singers like Anna and Clair, being the focus of attention drawing attention seemed to lead to some anxiety. Anna favoured a concert that was small and non-threatening, and Clair was initially very self-conscious, 'I was really shy…I don't know what they're going to think about me, they might think I'm a bit weird…I was looking down…uncomfortable'. By performing in pubic the singers are revealing aspects of themselves and while most singers it is something they are 'hungry' for, for others it exposes their vulnerability.

The performance space is a safe but public place in which members can engage in identity work. Chapter 7 has already explored how participating in the music groups allows members to reconcile their homeless identity (McCarthy, 2013) and adopt an able music identity. The performances create further opportunities for singers to cement and perform their new identities and receive positive validation through this new persona. Where their 'spoiled' (Goffman, 1968) stigmatising homeless identity, defined them as 'other' and different to the rest of society, engaging in a performance and displaying this new able identity, presents an accessible version of their authentic self, which is accepted and validated by the audience. In this way they challenge the stigma of homelessness and confront their other-ness. This new identity is validated through applause and standing ovations but also through meaningful interactions after the performance with the audience.

For Mark the experience of communicating with people after a show made him understand what it feels to be ‘famous’. He recounted a story from after a performance of The Passion:

> after we finished er the first performance and um I was at the tram station and I had my hood up and this couple came up to me and said excuse me er, yeah, was you in The Passion we, yes I was. He said that was fantastic…I thought, thank you for that, that really nice of you to say it but I didn’t realise people would know who I was…I was standing there this group just looking at me and I thought, I wonder what they looking at and they just came up and said, can we have a picture took with you

This idea of the performance leading to an identity linked to fame was reinforced by King, who when asked how he felt after a performance said, ‘like *most* rock stars (laugh)…you’re on a high’ and this was reinforced through his interactions with the ‘entertainment business people’ who came to congratulate the singers after a show. SO group members had their musical identity further validated through their interactions with artistic professionals, who were brought in to work on a show. They experienced being not only accepted but treated as equals to the professionals. Danny spoke of ‘equality’ and in reference to the audience he said, ‘it was very hard for people to (unclear) establish who was who’. The parity between group members and professionals was an intended goal of SO, with founder Matt saying the professionals and group members have ‘equal artistic and social quality’ at a performance. SO reinforced the musical identity of singers, by calling all their members ‘performers’. It was interesting that singer Danny happily used the title ‘performer’ on official SO business, but could not reconcile this title on a personal level, saying, ‘you might be getting out of your depth’, suggesting he did not want to give the impression to others he felt he was better than anyone else or behaving inauthentically.

Not all singers though, wanted to remove themselves from the label of homelessness and there was a pride in its association. When SO singers were given the opportunity to drop the association, they did not support the proposal.

and chose to hold on to the homeless identity affiliation. Matt said his singers argued that it challenged the negative association of homelessness showing 'others what we can achieve', claiming it as 'something positive rather than negative'. Matt argued that performances give the public an opportunity to see people who are homeless through their 'achievements' rather than just focusing on their 'problems', bringing 'dignity'. Performances can be a catalyst for 'dispelling myths' around what people are capable of achieving and they help with 'raising awareness' of the social condition. The public performances are an opportunity for society to challenge its own perspective on homelessness and the social stigma. Matt said that in an increasingly 'inward looking' and 'divided' world, the need to bring audiences and performers together through the arts to address the misunderstandings and social divisions was particularly pressing. The performances then can enable meaningful community work to happen and create an environment for increased understanding and tolerance.

Summary

The performances can be a key milestone in the life of the singing groups set up for people who are homeless. They mark important moments for the singers as they have an additional charge, becoming 'a peak experience' (Ansdell, 2010b, p.185) and are experienced as special events. They mirror many of the positive emotional aspects of the weekly rehearsal but there is a sense that they are more intense experiences. Performances bring opportunities for singers to engage in positive emotional states that are incongruous to homelessness, with singers experiencing achievement, pride and self-esteem and being the ones that are givers not the ones in need. There is a positive relational aspect to the groups being involved in performing. Members form a tight bond and work collectively towards a goal, building on the social skills developed in the weekly session. Not all singers reported an emotional and social buzz from performing. For some it led to experiences of vulnerability.

Performances are a public display of people who are homeless constructing a positive musical identity and shifting from the socially imposed 'spoiled' identity of homelessness. A new authentic self is presented which is positively validated through applause and standing ovations. The interaction between the singers and audience after a show is critical and leads to members having meaningful interactions with people beyond homelessness and part of the wider community. This exchange not only leads to the singer's experiencing being accepted but allows for society to gain a deeper understanding of homelessness and some of the stigmatising myths can be challenged. Performances do, though, add to the work of the organisations, in terms of added administrative and financial burdens. Also, group leaders must manage the expectations of the singers and the organisations and negotiate solos and repertoire, which can have a negative impact on the running of the weekly session.

Discussion

The findings from this study are explored in relation to relevant literature. This discussion argues that the performances create the space for singers to find self-worth, addressing their homeless identity and presenting their musical identity to society. In this way they receive approval which brings agency to explore positive future selves. The public performance is also a call to action for the audience.

8.4 Impact on the Performer and Identity Work

When people who are homeless become trapped in a 'demeaning social context' (Snow et al., 1994, p.472), they look for opportunities to step away from the self and attempt to find meaning in their lives (Snow and Anderson, 1993). By performing in a singing group, they can find a sense of life coherence and this in part comes from being involved in a heightened peak experience (Ansdell, 2010b) and accessing positive emotional states.

Research with other vulnerable singers has found that performing leads to experiences of self-worth and accomplishment (Henley et al., 2013), feeling whole and complete (Magee, 2017) and an increase in self-esteem and confidence (Bailey and Davidson, 2002). Singers connect to their emotional self, whilst presenting and expressing positive aspects of their persona which they can manage and control in front of an audience (Ruud, 2008; Davidson and Faulkner, 2010). This is 'the self in action' (DeNora, 2015, p.86) and performers project who they are to others, through their bodies (O'Bryan, 2015) and through their voice, revealing an essential part of their personal identity (Welch, 2005). By connecting to their sense of self through their voice, they are claiming their authority (Iliya, 2011) and demonstrating to society that they are 'homeless not voiceless' (Nordberg et al., 2018). Through this public declaration of self, they are expressing what is worthwhile and meaningful about themselves (Bailey and Davidson, 2003).

Singers present an authentic version of self when they perform in a group that has the homeless label attached and this involves a level of risk (de Quadros, 2018). Singers not only present their skills, qualities and worth (Bailey and Davidson, 2002), but also their homeless 'damaged' self, with its association with poverty and disadvantage and social stigma. Through making themselves vulnerable in this way, there is a possibility of being rejected or ridiculed (Davidson and Faulkner, 2010). Jim, the non-singer in this study talked about this 'gamble' when he discussed why he had not joined a group. He said, 'if you stand up and do anything, if you put your head above the parapet in *any way* (.) people are going to (.) try and knock you down'. Through the safety of the performance space the stigmatised aspects of their life as well as the achievements and successes, become visible and accepted by the audience.

The skills that the singers present, reflects a public validation of their repaired homeless identity and the construction of a musical identity. This space provides the ideal opportunity to reject, distance and reconcile their spoiled, damaged homeless persona and engage with a new sense of self that is

projected through the music. This musical identity is validated and 'witnessed' by the audience (Ansdell, 2010b; Bailey and Davidson, 2005) Although there is little research with homeless singers on this shift from a 'spoiled' to a musical identity, there has been research with vulnerable musicians in other fields that support this idea. People with disabilities can experience social exclusion (Hassan, 2017), being ignored, or only involved in interactions about their disability. In a similar way to people who are homeless, they have a socially imposed damaged identity and seek to create a positive 'able' identity apart from their disability (Magee, 2002). Evidence for their damaged identity being subsumed by a musical identity, was found in a study by MacDonald & Meill (2002). Here the musicians with disabilities revealed how audience members communicated meaningfully after a show and evaluated their music in a professional manner. This positive identity shift has also been witnessed by members of a prison choir (Henley et al., 2013). When singing in a group with inmates and people from the local community, singers from the prison experienced a 'positive identity change' (p.145) which was reinforced at performances. The research identified that these events brought opportunities for people from the prison choir to re-engage in society and interact with people beyond the prison community.

Social interactions impact how singers see themselves and their future. The performances can be a catalyst for action for the singer and help influence their 'possible self' (Markus and Nurius, 1986). The 'possible self' is a person's sense of who they might hope to be in the future, which influences their behaviour and is an incentive for action in the present. Engaging in biographical work (Magee, 2017) through the lyrics, 'stimulates feelings about future events, expressed as hope' (Magee, 2007, p.30), and enables singers to imagine a positive future and take some of control over their life (Magee, 2007). It is interesting that some research has indicated that vulnerable performers can feel less dependent on others through the experience of being involved in a pubic concert (Bailey and Davidson, 2003; Hassan, 2017). The performances then become a place to influence behaviour and activity for

positive action beyond the group. Singer Mark and SO founder Matt both talked about concerts as a catalyst for action, saying that once the hurdle of a performance is overcome, the next life challenge is less difficult. This was also observed with the Som da Rua homeless group (Boal-Palherios, 2017), where the musicians felt if they could meet the demands of the performance, then 'tomorrow I can go a little further'. The concert brings feelings of agency (Magee, 2017) and empowerment and gives singers the sense of increased life control and more 'optimism about the future' (p.638). This sense of mastery is reflected in Ruud's (1997a) quality of life model, where he proposes that engaging in music leads to people feeling they have more influence over their life.

The performances are a public yet safe environment where singers are given the opportunity to engage in activities that bring feelings of self-worth. The stigma attached to the homeless identity is rejected and a new hopeful persona is presented to the audience. The adoption of an accessible and acceptable identity constructed from engaging in music is accepted by the audience and the story and experiences of the singer are validated. This societal affirmation can motivate the singer to see themselves in a new light, find a voice and bring about change in their lives beyond the group.

8.5 The Role of the Audience

A performance of a singing group made up of people who are homeless is a unique event. It brings two groups of people together to face each other in an organised and choreographed environment and there maybe few other opportunities for this type of positive interaction beyond this space. Part of its uniqueness is that the performers routinely experience feeling unseen and ignored in society, but a public concert makes them the focus of an event, with an expectation they will be seen and heard. The performance creates a safe place for this to happen, as there is a natural separation between singers and audience (Bailey & Davidson, 2002; 2005). This relationship is in part

managed by the rules of a traditional concert being adhered to; there is a stage area, the audience face the performers and they listen until a cue is given that applause is expected (Boal-Palheiros, 2017). It is also facilitated by the group leader, who ensures the safety of the concert environment (Ansdell, 2010b; Bailey and Davidson, 2003) and who forms the bridge between both groups.

There are expectations on both the singers and audience members to fulfil a role (Goffman, 1956). Both are involved in 'impression management' (p. 48), presenting an acceptable version of themselves and helping the other group maintain their role (Goffman, 1956). This 'veneer' hides something of the tensions behind the scene. The singers strive to present an image of respectability, complying and conforming to social rules (Bailey and Davidson, 2003), as this brings increased opportunity for social interaction with the audience. Singer Ange spoke of an 'incident' (p.134) before a concert when two singers were fighting, and the building's security guards had to be called. Her sense of shame around this incident reveals how the controlled impression can slip and how the social rules can be broken, presenting an unpalatable version of the group. The socially accepted role of the audience is to hide any feelings of fear, disgust or responses that perpetuate the stigma of homelessness. It is to applaud, appreciate and witness (Ansdell, 2010b) and to validate the positive version of sense of self being presented in the performers (Magee, 2017).

The singers and audience members are in a live relationship during and after the concert and for some singers like Mark, that relationship extended to the tram stop where he was recognised and asked for a selfie. It is an authentic and 'meaningful exchange' (Bailey and Davidson, 2002, p. 241) and singers are eager for the interaction (Bailey and Davidson, 2005). Research with disadvantaged and homeless singers by Dingle et al. (2012) found that the favourite moments of being in the choir were the concerts and this was due to the warm reception they received and the connection with the audience. This interaction meets the need for social inclusion and acceptance by the singers.

The audience are ‘witnessing’ (Ansdell, 2010b) the singers’ talent and skills, their worth (Bailey and Davison, 2002) and they reinforce the new positive persona. By showing their vulnerable emotional selves to the audience in this way, singers open up the opportunity to connect with the audience and ‘build a bridge to society’ (Bailey and Davidson, 2002. p.246).

What of the audience’s expectations of the performance? The groups cannot reproduce the artistic quality of professionals and the performances are free from ‘elitist expectations’ (Bailey and Davidson, 2005, p. 295). Audiences are aware of what they coming to hear or see as the label of homelessness is overtly attached to the performance. In a study with singers with learning disabilities (Cassidy and Sims, 1991), people were invited to rate a musical performance and were asked about tone, diction, intonation, technique and appearance. Where the special education label was explicit and the disability was visually apparent, it had a positive effect on the rating. Where there was no label, a lower rating was given. The researchers argued that when there is an awareness of a performer’s disability, less is expected, and success is seen as over-achievement. This transfers to the homeless choir concerts, where audiences are empathetic, understanding (Boal-Palheiros, 2017) and are not judging singers on musical excellence (Bailey and Davidson, 2003). Ansdell (2010) describes it as audiences being interested in the ‘*person*-in-the-music’ (p.172), not the sound. However, SO’s founder Matt, challenged this said, ‘we aim for equal artistic and social quality’ between the professional musicians who work on a show and the group members and that ‘if you believe in people you can make art that is super high’. But although SO shows have received 5 star reviews in The Times and four star reviews in The Guardian and The Stage (*Streetwise Opera*, 2019), it would be disingenuous to suggest that the quality of the whole performance matches that of a professional company (MacDonald & Meill, 2002). The groups are not claiming to match the abilities of experts and nor are the organisations intending to train people who are homeless to learn singing skills to this standard.

There has been no research, as yet, conducted with audiences at a music event for performers who are homeless, but there have been studies with classical music, chamber music, jazz and amateur operatic audiences (Pitts, 2004; 2005, 2014; Pitts and Burland, 2013). These studies inform this research by revealing some of the expectations of audience members. The motivation to come to a concert is varied and while chiefly it may be prompted by the music, some people are drawn by the social experience (Pitts and Burland, 2013). Others said they came because they felt a sense of responsibility towards an organisation or wanted to ensure the continuation of live music (Pitts, 2014). While these may reflect some of the drivers for audiences coming to see the performances of homeless singing groups, it could be assumed that there is also a moral and social incentive for a homeless singing group and perhaps even a curiosity (Pitts, 2014). Being in the audience is a social experience (Pitts and Burland, 2013), where a sense of community can be fostered between the audience members and the performers (Lamont, 2012). Performers can experience welcome from an audience (Pitts, 2005) mirroring the welcome singers receive in their groups. Audience members can receive pleasure in learning about the personalities of the performers through the show and similarly the performers want to be able to see the response of the audience (Pitts and Burland, 2013). For performers who are homeless, this connection to the audience is critical in order to receive positive feedback and validation. People in the audience of a public event embody a wider sense of society and they represent the world beyond homelessness.

When the groups perform, they reflect societies social imbalance, holding a mirror up to what is happening in relation to poverty and disadvantage. Singers on stage represent discrimination and marginalisation in society and this cannot be hidden from the audience (Davidson and Faulkner, 2010). Bailey and Davidson (2003) argue that when performers who are homeless sing, they make the audience ‘feel something’ (p.24). At performances in this study, the groups sung about the negative impact of homelessness they had

experienced, for example Clair related to her personal experiences of homelessness when she performed the song *Another Day In Paradise*. Here she exposed her reality and life story, which was acknowledged by the audience. While the performance reflects the societal injustice, it also offers an image of 'hope for the future' (Bailey and Davidson, 2003). Within the performance space equality and dignity are upheld and maintained; a model of a healthy democratic society (Taylor, 1994). SO founder Matt, described one concert as 'almost like a dream of what society could be like'. This idea that the performance lifts the lid on poverty and discrimination in our communities but gives a taste of what another world might look like perhaps explains why audiences are so emotional and moved at concerts and there is 'not a dry eye in the house'.

The performances can be seen as a call to action, a political act, showing the audience that homelessness is 'a collective issue', a societal problem (Davidson and Faulkner, 2010). One homeless songwriter in a study by Magee (2017), said, 'my story is about everybody' (p.638). LGBT Choirs in America have actively used their public performances to this end, singing as a political act to shift public opinion and break down barriers (Veblen, 2013). Bailey and Davidson's (2003) term 'social missionaries' (p.29), to describe performing singers who are homeless is very apt, as the singers are advocating for all disadvantaged people. Homeless singers were also described by Bailey and Davidson as 'messengers of hope' (2003, p.25) offering faith for others who are marginalised and struggling to find a place in society and also acting as a catalyst to shift public opinion about homelessness. SO founder Matt, reflected that these performances can be socially transformative when he said, 'we didn't preach anything about politics, just everyone sang together'. He argues that there has never been more need for global social cohesion, and the arts is one way to address divisions. The performances play a critical role in highlighting and addressing social barriers and enabling different groups to face each other and confront social issues in a safe controlled environment.

8.6 Conclusion

The musical performances given by singers who are homeless are extraordinary events. They provide the opportunity for singers to engage with heightened emotional experiences and explore states that are incongruous to homelessness, such as achievement, pride, being the givers not the people in need and self-esteem. They also bond the singing group together through the shared experience and the additional time spent together, although tensions and jealousy can arise around solos. The meaningful social exchange and interaction between people who are homeless, and the wider society might not happen in many other situations and is only possible because of how the relationship is closely stage managed. The environment remains safe for both audience and singers. Performances allow singers to publicly reconcile their homeless identity and celebrate their musical identity. This persona is acknowledged and validated by the audience. The singers experience being heard and accepted, which leads to self-worth and emotional wellbeing. This can be a catalyst for action and support singers to overcome other hurdles in their life and explore other possible future ways of being. While audience see the achievements, skills and possibilities for the singers, they also witness the poverty and discrimination in their community. The performances offer a vision of what a fairer more equal society might look like and is a call to action for the audiences too, to challenge the stigma associated with homeless and to confront the people behind the label.

Chapter 9 ‘Singing is Life’: A Study of Choirs for Singers who are Homeless in Rio de Janeiro

This chapter presents the findings from a research study with choirs set up for singers who are homeless in Rio de Janeiro. It considers the data from interviews with five choir members and two leaders conducted during an arts and homeless ‘occupation’ of the city as part of the Cultural Olympiad. The study also coincided with the launch of a new International Arts and Homeless Movement. The chapter considers the singers’ and leaders’ experience of being involved in choirs and explores the findings in four themes. The first, *Not the Same Person Afterwards*, considers the emotional, mental and social benefits from participating. The second theme*, I Am Someone*, considers the identity work that singers engage in, through connecting to their own life story through the lyrics and becoming more visible to other people who are homeless and society. The third, *I Am Part of Society,* builds on the previous theme around identity and proposes that participation opens a pathway for singers to be introduced and to re-engage with society. The final theme, *Tensions Between Singers,* explores the few challenges that were reported in the groups and questions why the experience of participating has been reported as being so positive. It explores the tensions between singers and how leaders respond to conflict and inappropriate behaviour. The findings are then explored in relation to current literature and theory.

9.1 Not the Same Person Afterwards

The participants in this study gave accounts of how participation in choirs brought positive emotional and mental benefits and this section will consider each of these wellbeing factors in turn, looking at them against the reality of being homeless in Rio. It then looks at how singers increase their social networks through participating, by forming relationships with other singers, their choir leaders and an international network.

9.1.1. Emotional Wellbeing

Singers arrive at the choirs for the first time in a detached and insular emotional state. Choir Leader Thiago said, 'people come here they are really closed er really shut down er they have a closed face, really defensive'. Singer Carlos described himself as 'really introvert' and not unable to 'relate to other people'. He recognised that joining his group helped him to become more open, saying, 'well it made me come out of my shell'. He observed that others saw this change in him, 'you would always have your head down and now you're so open'. This openness has a positive impact on mood and emotions. Interviewees spoke of the groups in terms of being 'happy', 'enjoyment', 'pleasure', 'lifted', 'fun' and a reason to 'smile again'. Performances were moments when singers were highly aroused and described by Carlos as a time to 'have fun'. All these positive emotions reflect a Brazilian trait, according to singer Paulo, who said everyone 'including the homeless population, we like the joy, we like carnival, we like football, we like smiles, we like the joy, we are happy people naturally'.

Carlos felt the repertoire may have a positive effect on the anger of some singers, observing that some were 'swearing and always really angry and they actually spend time learning those lyrics, studying those lyrics' and as a result, 'maybe they change, maybe the next day they don't walk around cursing everyone, they just walk around singing'. For singers, Elizabete and Paulo there was also a 'spiritual' and 'cleansing' element to the choir, saying participation enabled 'cleaning of your soul'. Some singers experienced a feeling of energy referring to a greater 'motivation' and using the term 'flourish' and being 'lifted' and Elizabete noticed 'it works a lot on your self-esteem'. This state of heightened energy sits alongside the group having a calming effect, 'relieving stress' and allowing singers to be 'more relaxed', a therapeutic-like effect. Nery offered a further example, he felt music worked as a non-invasive mental health relief, a 'natural remedy', saying it prevented singers from 'having to take anti-depressants'. The only specific medical condition referred to was by Nery who had Tuberculosis and said the choir allowed him to 'revive'

himself. Paulo observed that a nourishing experience also came from the music, saying it 'can nurture and help' singers in the group.

Choir leader Rico summarises the changes he observes in his singers through participating, saying he:

> sees visible changes…the first time people come to the choir they, you see a change in their expression. People tend to come and look really tough and a bit closed and then after you get them to sing, they want to know when's the next rehearsals, how can they get back again, so they open their hearts in a way

Eizabete referred to the fragility of the positive emotions associated with the choir experience. When asked how she felt after the big performance that launched the Arts and Homeless Movement said she 'felt quite awful when that ended…I wish we could perform every Saturday'. This implies that the positive emotions have a temporal aspect and the groups need to sing regularly in order to maintain the aroused state.

When singers experience a positive emotional shift in their mood and emotional state it has an impact on their wellbeing and this is particularly significant, because the experience of homelessness is so damaging and isolating in Rio. The interviewees described few other circumstances beyond the choir where their emotional health was supported. By opening-up emotionally in this way, singers are preparing for the identity work that they will conduct in the choir and this will be explored in the third theme in this chapter, *I Am Someone*.

9.1.2 Mental Engagement and Stimulation

Singer Nery described the choir working as a 'mind remedy', highlighting the positive mental benefits the choir affords. Singer Joao said, 'the main benefit is occupying people's minds, keeping their minds busy…something to think about'. Paulo described this effect at night:

> it's like something that's almost like within you, because when the sun goes down all of a sudden a song comes to his mind, he says I don't search it anywhere, it just comes to my mind, it just pops into my mind and I'm out of nowhere, singing

Events associated with the choir act as a distraction and Joao says, 'you have to rehearse tomorrow at eight because you have a public presentation [performance] tomorrow…[it's] something to think about…' and he said he was 'always looking forward to the next thing'. Nery talked of being 'in a bad situation' and feeling 'down', due to having contracted TB and living in a homeless shelter and he needed something to 'occupy his mind'. Performances particularly were associated with keeping the singer's mind active, as they involved extra rehearsals and adjusting to a new structure. Joao said this kept his 'mind occupied', giving him 'something to think about and look forward to':

> you have to rehearse tomorrow at eight because you have a public presentation [performance] tomorrow…I have to be there at a certain time, I have to be there again at certain time, I have to rehearse

Participation also serves to arouse the mental capacity of singers. They were cognitively pushed, having to concentrate to learn new musical skills and repertoire. Elizabete said light heartedly, 'I can't even read or write in Portuguese, how am I going to sing in English?' and Nery summed this up saying 'being there is what stimulates'.

A further element that brought mental wellbeing was the positive anticipation associated with the weekly rehearsals and regular performances. This was described by Joao as something 'to look forward to. Nery echoed this referring to this sense of 'hope, the expectation', for his fellow singers, who were, 'always looking forward to the next thing'.

The choir brings mental benefits by engaging and stimulating the singers and acting as a distraction. The structure of the session and the excitement of a public performance help the singers to look forward to something hopeful. These benefits support the groups as a place to foster emotional and mental wellbeing and where new social interactions can occur.

9.1.3 Social Wellbeing

Singing in a choir is a relational activity. It requires singers to engage both musically and socially with choir members and leaders. This section will explore the general relationships between people who are homeless, then look at the social shift when people join a choir. The role of the cleader is then explored and their interactions with the singers. The participants in this study had an opportunity to engage with an international arts and homelessness delegation and the impact on choir members is considered.

Interactions Between People who are Homeless

Homelessness in Rio for some singers was associated with social isolation and a feeling of being alone. Singer Paulo aptly describes this saying, 'I live on the streets, I have no one'. Despite the street sleepers sleeping in groups and gathering at the same places to eat, they reported a lack of social connection to other people in the same situation. Joao, who had experienced twenty years of homeless, identified himself as a loner and said he trusted very few people and Paulo spoke of his isolation saying, 'you *are* alone…sometimes you think you can count on your friend right there, you can't really count on them'. Singers implied that they distanced themselves from other homeless people, reflecting a technique observed by Snow and Anderson (1993). Elizabete who makes money each day from selling biscuits, said she had 'always been independent' but separated herself from other people who were homeless but who do not show her tenacity, saying they 'don't make money, they didn't have this idea, they just drink or they use drugs…they just expect food'. Paulo felt others had given up and 'were just

waiting for death to come' unlike himself, whom he saw as someone was pro-active as a person who is homeless. He was a member of a political homeless people's movement and belonged to two choirs. This distancing serves to remove Elizabete and Paulo from the stigma associated with homelessness and suggests a hierarchy where they place themselves more favourably above others, creating an us versus them tension. This reflects the same distancing by the general public to people who are homeless in Rio. Singer Carlos believed he was viewed with disgust, 'just vagabonds and bums and hobos, eugh', indicating both a sense of blame and distaste from the wider community.

Paulo referred to the tensions between different groups. There was territorial conflict linked to where different people slept, and a 'feud' between street sleepers and those living in a hostel. Some churches and shelters had tried to address this division and help people to 'see themselves and then see other people and realise that they are part of …a wider group'. Carlos was the only singer who spoke about the camaraderie between people who are homeless saying:

> at least I have people around I can have fun with, of course, you have the tough times, but you have the fun times…even though… sometimes it's a very violent place

but he also referred to how he was 'really introvert' and did 'not relate to other people' when he first joined the choir.

The accounts that signers gave about their interactions with other homeless people outside of the choir suggest there is a lack of connection, people struggle to form close supportive relationships and it is a tense social environment. This may be explained by looking at the harsh reality of living through homelessness in Rio. There is no social support and survival is dependent on sourcing the limited resources available. It is a competitive environment. This could explain why singers arrive at the choir distrusting other members. Joao, who was the most socially wary of all the choir member

interviewees, said he was pleasantly surprised that when he initially arrived at the group, he found that ‘not everyone is just a dickhead’. He recognised, however, that the choir afforded him the opportunity to challenge his misconceptions of other homeless people:

> you meet other people and sometimes you might have an impression about someone, but only when you meet them and then chat to them and you know their story then you get to know people and it adds something to your life

Elizabete, also felt that meeting people who were homeless through the choir brought a deeper understanding of other’s experiences and said it was important:

> to hear and listen to other people’s stories and learn that some of them are pregnant, some of them have other problems, so it’s good…to have that exchange…of experience

Both Joao and Elizabete comments suggest that this is unusual and does not occur between homeless people beyond the group. Meeting and listening to the experiences of other homeless people led Joao to think he was now more tolerant and accepting of other people in a similar situation. Carlos also observed that he was now more sociable as a result of being in the group and says, ‘now that I am in the choir with all the different people, I’m more open to mingling with other people’ seeing himself as ‘someone who can speak to people’. He enjoyed the responsibility of connecting the group together. As he owned a mobile phone Rico, the leader, would contact him to pass on information to the rest of the group on the streets. He saw himself as ‘a sort of hub’ and the person who ‘recruits everyone’ for concerts.

Homelessness in Rio was described as an environment that lacks social companionship and support and where there is little empathy and understanding for others or sense of community. This may explain why the choir members can arrive at the group closed and suspicious of other singers.

The accounts given by interviewees suggest that the groups create the space for people who are homeless to interact and listen to each other's experiences and become more tolerant and understanding. Singers described themselves as more sociable and Joao said that he was now more open to join other 'different social groups'. The other important relationship that singers form within their groups is with their choir leader.

Singers Relationships with the Choir leaders

The choir leaders in Rio, play a critical role in the groups and how they support and interact with their singers. Thiago and Rico both spoke with a sense of equality in reference to their singers, where there was little sense of hierarchy between staff and members. Thiago actively tried to show his singers 'that he's just like them' and Rico talked of putting himself 'in other people's shoes' and 'when you look at someone and you wish him everything you wish for yourself'. There is a sense of shared humanity, compassion and a commitment to bringing a deep connection to their singers. Thiago had not worked with people who are homeless before this job and had enquired about additional support from his employers at the Catholic Cathedral, where his choir was based, to deal with the challenging non-musical aspect of his job. He asked if he 'could have a social worker here, a psychologist'. This indicates how he tried to separate the musical part of his job from the emotional and behavioural issues that he had to address. His request for additional support was declined, but he did continue to run the group but said he had to adapt his teaching style. He found that, unlike his other professional choir, if he was 'tough with the person who is living on the streets it can be fatal to them' and trigger mental health issues. So, he found a style that was more nurturing and supportive to do with psychological related issues. Rico had worked as a support worker in the homeless serves before he became a choir leader and singer Paulo referred to this prior experience:

> he hung out with homeless people, he knows how they live, he knows their reality, he understands their reality…he knows what is needed to kind of handle the situation. It's not just a choir, it's a

> choir for homeless *people* so you have to handle the situation more than just teach music

These accounts of the leaders indicate the special qualities a leader needs to work with this population in Rio. It also suggests that there are a significant number of issues and challenges that arise within the groups. Although some of these are explored in the final theme, *Tensions Between Singers*, it was felt the interviewees in this study did not share the full extent of the problems that can arise in the sessions.

Nurture, care and support were a key part of the role for the two choir leaders, which contribute to the emotional wellbeing of singers. Rico and Thiago, both used the word 'love' when describing their work. Thiago said, you 'always have to work with love' and Rico said, 'we are all part of the same thing, the universe, summarised in just one word, love'. Empathy for their singers was particularly evident with Rico saying, 'you have to have empathy, you have to be close'. Carlos was in singing groups with both Thiago and Rico and said, 'they do care', indicating the emotional support from both leaders.

As well as caring for his singers, Rico suggested a deeper level of connection, saying 'you have to be a friend'. Singer Joao described a time when 'Rico invited him to keep him company' at a concert taking place at the home of a musician from an orchestra. While this illustrates how Rico treated Joao as a friend, the opportunity was not offered to other singers suggesting there exists a social hierarchy in terms of the relationship Rico has with his singers. Joao noted that Rico 'makes a separation about who can come to what event'. While Rico may see himself as a friend to his singers, there are clear boundaries around who is able to perform the role of a friend to him. Singer Carlos was positive, though, about the authenticity of both leaders and said he expected to receive the same welcome and respect when he met a leader outside of the group.

The interaction the leader has with his singers can enhance their wellbeing, by demonstrating respect, love and care and treating them as a friend. This is particularly significant when healthy supportive relationships are so challenging to form for people who are homeless, and it is also critical because the leaders are from the wider society beyond homelessness.

Belonging

There were correlations across the interviews to the choir being like a family. Joao used the word 'family' to describe his group, casting Rico in the role of a father, who 'runs this family', according to his own 'rules' and 'values'. Rico himself described the singers in his choirs as 'my kids'. For the singers, being attached to a group was critical, with Paulo saying, 'the choir is important because it gives you that sense of belonging'. This connection and bond to others seems particularly important, when isolation is so prevalent among people who are homeless in Rio. Rico says, 'when you are in a homeless situation you feel completely isolated, you feel like you don't belong'. For Nery the term 'belonging' was used throughout his interview in relation to his choir and he recognised the bond saying, 'yes, we can be part of something, yes we can belong somewhere…that sense of belonging is very important'. Singers in this study not only felt they belonged to their group, but as Thiago says, 'they feel a part of the project'. This is further reinforced at public performances when different groups sang together under the organisational name of Uma só Voz / With One Voice. The name implies that individuals come together to form one unit.

By being involved in the arts and homeless 'occupation' and the launch of the new Arts and Homeless Movement, the choir singers met international delegates involved in the field of arts and homelessness. They were aware they were also connected to a wider movement and bigger international community. Joao said it was 'amazing' to be 'part of this…not only the contact…with other homeless people as part of the project' but to meet 'with you guys', referring to the international delegates. Carolos also spoke of how

he enjoyed ‘exchanging experiences’ with international delegates on the exchange. A choir leader from an English homeless choir recorded a message from his singers for the Rio singers. This had an impact on Carlos and he asked to ‘send a message’ to the Grassmarket Community Choir that I was running at the time in Edinburgh. This message was recorded at the end of the interview. Both Joao and Carlos were positively impacted by this wider international connection. This international connection for the Rio singers and staff was a unique experience and widened their sense of belonging and sense of community. Their experience in the choirs was validated through hearing about other groups around the world.

Through participating in the groups, the singers develop social resources and skills that enable them to form positive relationships with others. They also develop tolerance and understanding of other people who are homeless. Through forming a relationship with their choir leader, they experience care and support. Belonging to a choir brings a sense of connection to others, both locally and globally, addressing their social isolation.

Theme Summary

The accounts that the interviewees gave of their experience of being part of choirs for people who are homeless, show that participation can bring benefits that support wellbeing and quality of life for singers. The harsh conditions, the lack of support by the state and the competition for resources indicate a competitive culture, where, in order to survive, people disconnect and distance themselves from others and physically and mentally withdraw. Singer Nery noted that people who lived on the streets in Rio seek out activities to relieve the negativity of homelessness and this theme has explored how choirs are reported to have a positive impact on the emotional and mental wellbeing of singers. The group also fosters the formation of meaningful relationships with other singers and the choir leaders, opening a new social network and bringing social tools that are useful beyond the choir. Within the safe environment that

is created in the choirs, the singes can explore aspects of their sense of self and engage in identity work, which is considered in the following theme.

9.2 I Am Someone

The people who are homeless in this study experience a sense of separation from the self and society. Through engaging with the music and lyrics, they explore their own life experiences and become emotionally engaged with their sense of self, performing identity work. This theme explores how singers engage in reconciling and constructing their identity though the choir and the impact of increased visibility at performances.

9.2.1 Connecting to Sense of Self

Homeless interviewees spoke of a sense of disconnection and separation from other people and society. Nery said that 'reality no longer exists' and singer Paulo said he felt 'detached from reality'. Rico, the choir leader, referred to the invisibility singers experienced, saying of his fellow non-homeless Rio residents, that people are 'completely invisible on the streets…you didn't even notice them'. Feeling unseen and not existing within the wider community may explain homeless singer's disconnection from their own sense of self. Paulo said, he felt 'away from reality when you are out on the streets so you er probably don't even see yourself anymore'. Homelessness brought personal loss and separation from the singer's previous life and former identities, Nery said:

> there is a big rupture in many senses, there is the marriage rupture, there is the family rupture and there is a social rupture and a professional rupture as well

The homeless interviewees spoke of how the experience of being in the choir enabled them to find themselves and connect to their sense of self. Paulo said participation helped singers to 'get to know themselves better' and Nery said,

‘it makes you more aware of where you are, of who you are, of what your situation is’. Participation brought opportunities for singers to examine their lives and re-associate with their emotional self.

The music and lyrics played a vital role in singers making this personal connection. Rico said his singers were ‘getting deeper inside…to places that you didn’t know about yourself’. He argued that the song lyrics could enable this and that they should reflect what the singers feel and tell their ‘story’. Choir leader Thiago suppored this, saying the lyrics can help singers to connect to experiences in ‘their own lives’. Two songs that were sung by all the With One Voice choirs provide an example. Semente do Amanhã (Seed of Tomorrow), translates as, ‘don't be afraid, this time will pass, don't fall into despair, don’t stop dreaming’, and in Fé na Vida (Faith in Life), ‘I just want to be happy, walk peacefully… and be proud and have the awareness that the poor has its place’. This ‘message’, as Paulo described it, embedded in the song, shares the singers’ experience of their homeless struggle and life aspirations. The lyrics, then are a vehicle for the singers to connect and testify to their sense of self. Rico said:

> music has a way, especially music lyrics has a way that you can identify yourself, sometimes you listen to a song as if it was talking about your life, personally…, how can somebody else that did [write] this song, because it’s about me. Music it tells what I feel, it tells my story

Rico argues that through the music the singers are performing identity work. They are confirming their life experiences through the song, doing biographical work (Magee, 2017) and identifying their story and experience. This reinforces their existence and challenges the detachment from self, that homelessness brings, where people feel they do not exist and are removed from reality.

For some singers, this connection to the self goes further and through their experience in the choir they reported that they were able to accept themselves and her current homeless situation. Elizabete said ‘I’m (.) starting to conform

a bit more…I'm starting to accept myself like this' and being in the choir specifically has 'helped me er be happier and accept my new situation'. Paulo echoed this, simply saying the choir helped singers to 'get to know themselves better', while Nery credits choir leader Rico with helping him achieve self-awareness and self-acceptance saying, 'I was like a mongrel horse and Rico taught me the skills and showed me that I can be an Arabian horse'. Participation enables the singers to reconcile their homeless identities. Through finding self-acceptance about their life situation, Elizabete said she could now imagine a more hopeful and positive identity, 'you start seeing yourself again as someone who can pursue a job, pursue a place for yourself, you can lead your own life'. Through Elizabete accepting her homeless identity she can project herself into a more hopeful positive future identity. The connection to the self and projection of a positive identity is encourage by Rico at the public performances. He asks his singers to be 'brave enough to present yourself' and then have the 'courage' 'start believing in yourself. The performances are a critical time for identity work for the singers.

9.2.2 Identity Work at Performances

The performances are a highlight for singers in the life of the choirs. They are a safe environment where people who are homeless are seen by society, which is contrary to what singers experienced on the streets, where they feel overlooked and ignored. Nery reinforced how they bring an opportunity to be recognised and seen saying, 'the public performances are almost like a shop window where we are showing ourselves'. These events shift the group from the privacy of the rehearsal space into an environment that is open and public, bringing feelings of exposure and visibility. When the singers are seen and acknowledged by the public, they are part of a group, rather than individuals. In Rio, where there is considerable alienation and fear towards people who are homeless, the singers signify their right to be in these public spaces through their belonging to a group and all wearing an organisational t-shirt. These pale blue pieces of clothing give singers access to parts of the city they may

not normally be welcome, and they make people who are homeless 'visible, the main event', according to Rico. The t-shirts also reinforce the homeless identity of the singers, but Elizabete argued that while the public are acknowledging their homelessness, they are also seeing beyond the label. She says, 'you're being seen for who you really are and not just somebody who is homeless'.

Some of these concerts that were part of the Cultural Olympiad were televised and appeared on the news. This additional exposure was viewed very positively by Elizabete who said,' oh my God, I don't even have a phone, I don't even have a TV and these guys saw me on TV, so it's amazing'. These televised appearances were important to other singers in her group as they brought an opportunity to change the opinions of families and friends of the singers:

> Everyone is super excited because they feel like oh my family is going to be seeing me on TV and I'm going to be able to show them that I am no longer drinking (.) and I am here sober and I'm here singing er doing something

The singers perceived that their musical identity was an indication of success and having your life back on track, which might challenge the negative opinions of their families. Joao suggested that it did change the view of other people who are homeless. He said they now 'look up to' those in the choir, suggesting a new level of respect. This shift of opinion was also observed by Nery in his hostel, he said, 'when the people from the choir walk in they go, oh here comes the elite squad, because we have become like the elite squad of the shelter'.

This increased visibility though was a negative point for some potential new singers and the reason why they did not join the choir in the first place. Carlos said:

> People have judicial problems because some people on the streets are running away from their families or running away from

> the drug lords and their community, so they don't want to be exposed, they don't want their name to be out there

Joao highlighted an issue that arose in relation to the performances and increased recognition and visibility. He was frustrated by the small audience at a performance when he had perceived the choir putting in a lot of effort to prepare. For one event he felt the promotion had not been adequate, saying, 'it could have been a lot more marketed and attracted a lot more people'. Another issue was the feeling that singers had after a successful concert.

Performing in the choirs was generally experienced as a positive experience for singers. They were able to project their reconciled homeless identity and show that they were more than just this stigmatising condition. It brought opportunities for singers to engage with the public and to present homelessness in a way that was positive, addressing the cultural fear. Elizabete said, 'I am someone, I am not invisible', indicating that she has been seen and her existence has been validated through the increased exposure from performances.

Theme Summary

Becoming a member of a choir for people who are homeless in Rio brings opportunities for singers to explore their emotional self and connect to their life experiences. For some singers this brings a deeper acceptance of themselves and they can reconcile their homeless identity and project a more positive future. The public performances bring increased visibility for singers and this validates their existence and may help to shift negative perceptions of what homelessness means.

9.3 I am Part of Society

The increased visibility of the singers through the performances is important in building the bridge for them to re-engage with society. This theme considers this re-insertion of people who are homeless back into the community through

the audience's changing perception of homelessness and a wider cultural shift observed by other state organisations in Rio.

9.3.1 Re-inserted into Society

Through the singers accepting their homeless identity and reconciling it with their musical identity, they can interact with the audiences at performances. For the singers, the audience represent the wider society and it is interesting to compare how singers experienced their interaction with society when on the streets, where they were viewed as 'vagabonds and bums and hobos', to how they are received by an audience/society at a performance. Some performances occurred outside in public spaces, many of the same areas that homeless people might sleep, yet Carlos says when the audience were watching the singers perform, they were 'crying…looking at us and thinking, so many good people lost in this world'. The choir leader plays a key role in enabling this attitudinal shift of the public. One example was seen at an official Cultural Olympiad concert with local government dignitaries, where leader Rico actively re-introduced his singers to the audience, asking each person to say their name before they began singing. Rico served to bridge the gap between the singers and the audience and challenging their myths and fears around homelessness. The concerts are an opportunity for 'challenging the misconceptions' of homelessness and revealing the person behind the stigma. Carlos says of the performances 'it really touches people, it moves people' and they think 'wow, they're homeless but they're talented'. Elizabete was recognised by more than one person when she was 'out on the street', with people approaching her and saying, 'oh I saw you on TV' and they gave her 'a hug' and said she felt their 'support'. Nery insists that people who are homeless, 'are just like everyone else' and the concerts bring an opportunity for people to encounter homelessness in a safe space. By engaging with the singers, the audience are helping to address their social exclusion and offer a route back into society.

Both choir leaders believed that participating in choirs could offer a pathway to help people who are homeless 'move on' from their current situation and become 're-inserted' into the wider population. Rico saw his work 'as a way to get them to have a better life' and Thiago felt it could 'help them to see a future' and be a 'back door to living in society'. Thiago argued that those who came to his group do so because they 'are really interested in getting out of the streets'. Rico supported this by saying that since the start of the With One Voice choirs, which had been running for three months, 'they had five people getting out of the streets…into shelters, they don't want to be living on the streets'. Thiago felt his group could show the singers that 'being back in society is good'. It is interesting that he implies that the obligation is on the singer to make this happen rather than blaming structural forces that hold a person in a position of homelessness. This is supported by Rico who argues that singers 'can [im]prove themselves and get better' through group singing. The singers recognised that being part of the choirs could help be a bridge back to society. Nery actively used the performances he was involved with to re-engage with society and negotiate a new position. He said he was 're-writing his story for this period of life' on social media, putting up photographs of performances, publicly demonstrating a positive musical identity. Joao said being in the choir helped him to 'move forward'. Elizabete recognised a shift in her sense of self, finding a greater sense of agency about leaving homelessness and noting that as a result of the choir, she saw herself 'back in society' and had become someone who could see herself, 'as someone who can pursue a job, pursue a place your yourself, you can lead your own life…having more responsibility'. She demonstrated she has developed a greater sense of agency about her life and she would project herself into a more positive hopeful future, fully engaging in society.

9.3.2 Cultural Shift

The choirs may play a part in helping to shift attitudes: those of the singers who begin to see themselves as valuable and part of society and the

audiences and wider community, who are invited to see people who are homeless as full complete human beings and not just defined by their homelessness. This attitudinal shift is not confined to the organisation With One Voice but is reflected in the policy and practice of two other state organisations in Rio. Elizabete spoke about the Public Defence Office, a government department committed to defending the human rights of people who are homeless and seeking to prosecute those who have committed violations. She discussed the impact of this department's work and being 'invited to a meeting' where people were recording and addressing 'issues' where streets sleepers were beaten or treated 'really badly' by the police or public. The work of this organisation led her to perceive that 'the homeless had a voice' and she felt she had been listened to and was treated as a member of society. She also felt the work of this department was changing attitudes towards people who are homeless, saying 'the approach has changed' in the way people are treated on the street. This shift in giving people who are homeless a voice and recognising their rights as citizens was also reflected in the policy of a public library in downtown Rio called Biblioteca Parque. Paulo described it as 'beautiful place'. It housed one of Rico's choirs and had a policy of welcoming people who are homeless. Paulo spoke of this hospitality, saying that homeless people are not just welcomed in but 'they are invited in'. Elizbete could hardly believe this invitation, 'what me? can I come in there and watch a movie? Me, can I come in there and read a book?'.

The work of the Public defence office and Biblioteca Parque suggest a shift in the perspective of the state towards the homelessness. Elizabete believed that it 'shows how homelessness is being seen…different point of view' and she mused on whether this change was 'because of the Olympics, they started thinking of other ways of including the homeless in society'. These examples in Rio suggest a cultural shift towards people who are homeless and upholding their human rights.

Rico insisted that if a transformation was possible towards people who are homeless in Rio, then it had to be reflected in the attitude of the local population, saying ‘it’s the responsibility of society as a whole’. He described Brazilians as, ‘very individualistic, they don’t think about their neighbour…how can we think about people living in the streets if we don’t think about our neighbour’. This brings up the issue of who makes up the audience at homeless choir concerts. Are the people already sympathetic to the issues of homeless and already reject the dominant culture of alienation and discrimination towards people who are homeless? When Rico argues that it is up to his singers who are homeless to change ‘people’s views’ and that it was a ‘big responsibility’ on the part of the singers to ‘grab this opportunity’ to help change the attitudes of the audience, he implies that the audiences are not necessarily accepting or tolerant of homelessness and this is an ideal opportunity to challenged their opinions. Rico was very aware that the issue of homelessness was a ‘global problem’ but took comfort in the vision of With One Voice. He believed that bringing an international group of people together who are committed to addressing issues of homelessness though the arts would give the work more credibility and leverage. Having the delegation in Brazil, Rico felt was ‘a really precious moment’ giving legitimacy and wider publicity to his work.

Theme Summary

The public performances of the homeless choirs in Rio create an opportunity for audiences to confront homelessness and see the people behind the condition. This attitudinal shift challenges the stigma of the homeless identity and can offer a bridge back into society. The leaders argue it is the singers who must fight for this inclusion. Singers can be galvanised into imagining a better future and moving on from the experience of homelessness.

9.4 Tensions and Challenges

The data collected from the seven interviewees in Rio, created an overly positive impression of the choir experience. This has been considered in Chapter 3 where the implications of using a translator have been explored. There were, however, some aspects of participating that singers identified as challenging. One of these was conflict between singers. Nery spoke of tensions that arise when one singer feels criticised by another, 'sometimes one person makes a mistake and the person nearby tried to correct them and er he gets er insulted' which leads to an argument. Thiago also referred to the 'arguing' and 'fighting' that occurred in his group. Rico spoke about an incident between his singers, at a big performance for the Cultural Olympiad and the launch of With One Voice. Two members 'had a fight backstage, like the day of the presentation [performance], like a physical fight'.

Elizabete commented on a rule that was in place for her group:

> Rico has this rule that you cannot come to the choir rehearsals if you are drunk, if you have been drinking or you have been using drugs…in the beginning it was a bit difficult to control that but as we went along, people understood that those are (.) clear rules…that was reinforcing the zone creating this commitment yeah with the choir

Her use of the term, 'reinforcing the zone' suggests there are explicit codes in place. However, the incident between the two singers who had a fight before a concert discussed by Rico, did in fact involve one member who 'was drunk'. Despite him breaking the rule, he was still allowed to sing at the rehearsal and performance. Rico indicated that he confronts and challenges his singer's 'behaviour' and addresses 'the way they think' when he perceives it is unacceptable. He said he is 'as clear, as transparent, as real as he can be' when confronting singers. His response to his singers is to use compassion and empathy as he 'wouldn't like throw them away'. Rather than remove them from the group, Rico felt he 'really has to understand the difficulties of each person' and accepted that arguments between singers was all 'part of the process'. Rico clearly attempts to accept each singer and although there are

explicit rules in place, he adopts a flexible attitude in order to maintain inclusivity. Thiago did not discuss how he approached tensions between his singers, but the fact he asked for a psychologist to help him run the group, suggests relationships between members may have proved challenging. He did say he selected certain repertoire to send a 'message' to his singers and one particular song 'tells them to er get together and unite, to be in harmony'. Both leaders imply they use a soft approach to managing tensions between singers.

It is interesting that so few incidents between singers were recalled, especially as this chapter has already indicted the lack of social interaction and connecting between singers out on the streets and a culture that is competitive. Joao had said that he had expected the other members to be 'dickheads' when he first came, which highlights his suspicion, and this could to be a common opinion of others. Paulo indicated that the group members pass 'through a sieve' and only those who value the choir experience stay. Those that are looking for other needs to be met, such as food or medical care leave the group. Paulo was frustrated, though, when he perceived that other people did not value the group or recognise that it might be something that 'can nurture them and help them'

Theme Summary

This final theme from the Rio data has considered the challenges of being a group member. While there appear to be some rules in place to help manage conflict between singers, the leaders challenge inappropriate behaviour, but favour a policy of compassion and empathy to help understand the support the singers.

Summary

The findings from this study have explored the experience of being a singer and a leader of a choir set up for people who are homeless in Rio de Janeiro. It outlined the accounts of the positive emotional shifts and explored the mental

benefits that singers reported which contribute to improve wellbeing. The groups are social places and enable singers to connect with other people who are homeless, which appears to be a challenge beyond the choir. Singers reported being more tolerant and accepting of others and feeling connected and this sense of belonging extends beyond the immediate singing group to feeling part of an international network. This is especially significant, as the experience of homelessness in Rio is so isolating and possibly fractious and competitive.

Singers connect to their own story and life experiences through the songs and begin to accept their homeless situation, reconciling their homeless identity. Further identity work happens at performances when singers enter a relationship with audiences. They experience feeling seen and validated at performances and receive feedback that they exist and are part of society. Performances increase the visibility of homeless singers and enable them to publicly present a new musical identity and defy their 'spoiled' homeless identity. Through interacting with the audience, singers can reinstate their place in society and challenge the audience's misconceptions around homelessness.

Discussion

These findings are explored in relation to current literature and theory. This section argues that through adopting a positive musical identity, singers can challenge the dominant narrative that people who are homeless should be feared, stigmatised and 'othered'. Within the sanctuary of the group, singers can experience positive emotional and social benefits and can explore and play with who they are and who they want to be.

9.5 The Sanctuary

The experience of homelessness on the streets of Rio de Janeiro was described by participants in this study as one of invisibility, no longer existing or feeling part of society or reality. This matches the research conducted with people 'in a street situation' (Schmidt and Robaina, 2017) in Rio. In fact, this is the intention of some policies adopted by the authorities and perpetuated by the media and reflected in the views of the public. People who are homeless experience being separate and marginalised from the rest of urban life (Schmidt and Robaina, 2017) and treated as an outsider for deviating from the cultural norms (Robaina, 2011). Street sleepers may share the same spaces as the rest of society but must adopt a mantle of invisibility in order to remain unnoticed and be able to exist and 'be' in the city. They have lost the right to free movement (Heritage & Peacock, 2014) so invisibility is a survival strategy to remain undetected and safe (Robaina, 2011). The state and public perceive the homeless as 'non-citizens' and perpetuate an image of lazy, filthy, aimless wandering vagabonds, or as perpetrators or victims of violence and chemically dependent (Schmidt & Robaina, 2017). This distancing makes the policy of keeping areas 'clean' and 'vagrant free' and the systematic removal of people more acceptable and normalised (Schmidt & Robaina, 2017). Seven months before the Olympics there was a government policy to 'resolve' homelessness through removals; it was not fully implemented (Schmidt & Robaina, 2017), but there was an increase in people being 'lifted' from tourist areas. The authorities use force and intimidation to control homelessness, turning living and sleeping on the streets into a criminal offence.

The dominant narrative is that homeless people are a threat. The public are 'antagonistic' towards the homeless (Heritage and Peacock, 2014) and there are countless incidents of beatings, burnings and murder (Schmidt & Robaina, 2017). Some wealthier neighbourhoods pay security firms to keep their local streets 'clean' (Schmidt & Robaina, 2017). Heritage and Peacock (2014) gave an example of an incident reported in the media in Rio, where a young

‘beautiful’ white man was stabbed and killed by a ‘crack addict’ who was homeless. The press:

> screamed for action, accusing the public authorities of wilful negligence in abandoning Rio’s streets to a street population of criminal drug addicts (p.14)

The following night the authorities removed fifty-three people who were street sleeping and all but two were released. Knee-jerk responses introduced by the authorities to ‘placate public opinion’ (p.15) create a volatile and fragile situation for those on the streets.

This stigmatised ‘othering’ attitude towards people who are homeless indicates how the singers in this study experience their place in society. Yet, they also are very aware of being positively received when they perform, where they are not hidden, but are the focus on the streets and in public venues. This is an interesting dichotomy. The choir provides a positive force field around the singers who are homeless. It protects them from being stigmatised, leading to people feeling understood and seen. Elizabete says, ’you’re being seen for who you really are’ and Carlos emphasises it when he says the audience are looking at the singers thinking, ‘so many good people lost in this world’. The choir then becomes a refuge, a removal (DeNora, 2015) from stigma and a sanctuary. Within the sanctuary the audience/ society shift their perceptions from seeing people as undesirable ‘bums’, blamed for their own homelessness to ‘good’ people who are ‘lost’.

The impact of the choir as a sanctuary is explored in two ways. The first is the impact this has on the singer’s sense of self and the identity work that it enables. The second, explores how the sanctuary is a place of safety where emotional, mental and social benefits are experienced. These are each discussed in turn.

9.6 The Self, Identity and Re-insertion into Society

The sanctuary creates the space for people who are homeless to change their own self-perceptions. Singers were observed by their leaders arriving at their first rehearsals 'closed', 'shut down' and 'defensive' and disconnected from their sense of self, but the choir offers a space of refuge and a place of nurture. Research with a group set up for homeless musicians in Porto reflects this, arguing that rehearsals 'occur apart from their everyday lives' and they bring 'relief from their hard living conditions and problems' (Boal-Palheiros, 2017, p.76). Research by Cronely et al. (2018) with the Dallas Street Choir also proposed that the choirs cannot offer a 'cure' from homelessness, but they do bring a psychological and physical safe space. This haven comes, in part, through the compassion and friendship (Bailey and Davidson, 2002) offered by the choir leaders, but also though being removed from the fear and uncertainty of the homelessness experience (DeNora, 2015, p.49). The term removal is a delicate one to use in reference to street people experiencing homelessness. But DeNora's (2015) definition describes a positive experience, bringing 'respite from distress' and 'absence, or temporary abatement of pain' (p.1). Singers can physically and mentally relocate to a safe space and in effect explore and play and 'be' (DeNora, 2015). Boal-Palheiros (2017) argues that through engaging emotionally with the music and lyrics, singers can connect to their sense of self by exploring their lives and emotions of loss and hope in a safe and supported space. Singer Elizabete spoke about how participating in the choirs helped her accept her homelessness, reflecting Snow and Anderson's (Snow and Anderson, 1987, 1993) embracement identity talk. Through reconciling her homeless identity, she imagines a positive future where she has a home, a job and more control over her life.

Through connecting to a deeper sense of self, the singers in this study perform identity work through singing and performing in their groups. They appeared to be disconnected from the self as a result of homelessness. Paulo epitomised this when he said that when you are homeless, you 'don't even see

yourself anymore'. Homelessness was experienced by the singers as a dissociation from their former self, detaching from marriages, families and professions, all personal identifiers. People living on the streets absorb the stigmatising homeless 'spoiled' identity' (Goffman, 1968; McCarthy, 2013), which is externally imposed by others. This identity does not match the cultural norm which requires people to have a home. Failure to meet these societal expectations leads to feelings of low self-esteem and self-hatred (Taylor, 1994; Fraser, 2000).

People who are homeless continually play with their identity in order to achieve an acceptable social role and find feelings of self-worth (Snow and Anderson, 1993). Cultural activities, like singing in a choir creates the ideal creative environment to explore and play with their sense of self, performing identity repair work (Hassan, 2017). When the people who are homeless arrive at the choir, they are afforded the safe space of the sanctuary to re-form their identity through musical social interactions with other members, the leader and the audience (Hargreaves et al., 2017). The choir members construct a musical persona, an 'able' identity (Magee, 2002), based on achievement. This new persona subsumes the negativity of the stigmatised homeless identity, bringing stability and coherence (Hargreaves et al., 2017). The new identity is reinforced through the social interactions (McCarthy, 2013) and helps singers confirm their place in society (Hargreaves et al., 2017), bringing status (DeNora, 2017b) and adds to their life quality (Ruud, 1997a).

When people who are homeless present their musical identity at performances, they take ownership and control over how they are being received by the public and society (Davidson and Faulkner, 2010). They are challenging the stigma associated with deviating from the cultural norm (Robaina, 2011) and this opens a pathway for positive communication between homeless and non-homeless people. When singer Elizabete was approached and hugged in the street by a member of the public who had seen her perform with her choir on television, her new identity was validated. Where

she might have been ignored and seen as ‘vagabonds and bums and hobos’, she was greeted like a friend. It embodied warmth and acceptance. The choir leader plays a critical role in building a bridge between the singers who are homeless and society and enabling the barriers to be lifted. They publicly model a way of interacting with the singers, demonstrating dignity, respect and compassion. They also offer welcome and hospitality to the singers and the audience (Higgins, 2012) and create a space of safety for both to interact (Bailey and Davidson, 2002, 2005).

Performances bring an opportunity for non-homeless people to challenge stereotypes society holds and dispel myths (Bailey and Davidson, 2005) around homelessness. Higgins (2012) argues that making music in the community is ‘a protest against the dominant culture’ (p.42). Although no research has been conducted with audiences at homeless choir concerts to date, a study with an intergenerational choir at a performance (Darrow et al., 2001), found attitudes towards teenagers and senior singers moved in a positive direction from pre-test before the concert to post-test afterwards by the audience. The potential shift in attitude by people who watch a performance opens new possibilities for interaction with singers. Research with musicians with disabilities (MacDonald and Meill, 2002), found that performances brought new ways to communicate between performers and the audience. This exchange led to musicians feeling they were being treated professionally and being evaluated as a musician, not just viewed as a person with a disability. This social acceptance and feelings of normalcy brought self-esteem and empowerment. Bailey and Davidson (2002) recognised that singers in a homeless choir in Canada were eager for this ‘meaningful exchange’ (p.241), for their marginalised voices to be heard (MacDonald and Meill, 2002) and to be understood for who they are (Snow and Anderson, 1987). The performances can act as ‘a bridge’ (Bailey and Davidson, 2002, p.246) for the singers back into the community.

This section has explored how people who are homeless fulfil two opposing personas. On the one hand, they embody the stigmatised homeless identity, where they are feared and must remain hidden and not visible in order to exist and survive. On the other, they have an identity through the choir that is based on musical achievement. The audience perceive this musical identity when they see people who are homeless singing within the refuge of the choir. This identity brings opportunities for singers to interact with audiences and the public at performances and challenges the myths that people have about the homeless. The singers are seen and heard, and their existence is validated, and the interaction builds a bridge that offers a route back to society. Both the personal and social benefits of the new 'able' musical identity (Magee, 2002) improve the wellbeing of the singers.

9.7 The Emotional, Mental and Social Impact

The singers in this study gave an overtly positive report about how participating in the groups made them feel. They reported that it brought positive emotions, mental wellbeing and increased social opportunities. Rico observed that his singers were 'not the same person afterwards'. There were fundamental shifts in the singers from participating. The choir can be a safe sanctuary-like space and create the fertile environment for singers to explore who they want to 'be' (DeNora, 2015). It allows them to be emotionally open and vulnerable and through engaging with the lyrics, connect to their emotions in a safe place (Boal-Palheiros, 2017). Interviewees in this study indicated that the experience of homelessness required a guarded and closed attitude, where emotional vulnerability may be viewed as a weakness and therefore dangerous on the streets. Yet the findings indicate that the singers experience a positive emotional response from singing with others and this has been observed with other singing groups: university singers (Clift and Hancox, 2001), singers from a prison choir (Cohen, 2009); people who have gone through challenging life events (Von Lob et al., 2010) and women with post-natal depression (Perkins et al., 2018). Music affords a deep connection and

awareness of emotions (Ruud, 1997a) and can bring a release of positive emotions for choir members who are homeless (Bailey and Davidson, 2003). The mental benefits that interviewees reported also adds further evidence for the choir to bring life fulfilment. Participation acting as a mental stimulation matches the findings of research conducted with a homeless choir in Canada (2003). They found that living on the streets does not demand the same sort of concentration and memory that would be required from being a choir, where mental focus and internal processing are needed to meet the demands of the music. This focus directs the attention away from thinking about the challenges of homelessness and 'from internal preoccupation with their problems' (Clift and Hancox, 2010, p.80). Csikszentmihalyi's theory of flow (2008) offers a further explanation for the mental occupation that singers reported. His theory purports that life satisfaction is achieved through engaging in activities that are mentally absorbing and affords the right balance of skill and challenge. This sense of flow has been observed with people who are homeless and singing in a choir (Bailey and Davidson, 2002) It has been seen to bring mental freedom, as there is 'no space in consciousness for distracting thoughts, irrelevant feelings' (p. 225). This increased mental stimulation and absorption leads to greater agency for the singers (Ruud, 1997a) and help them take more control over their lives (Bailey & Davidson, 2003). These benefits are especially important for this singing population, who have higher mental health issues than the general population (Lovisi et al., 2003).

Expanding the social networks of the singers and increasing their opportunities to meet other people adds a further element of wellbeing. Social isolation and loneliness amongst people who are homeless is linked to depression, anxiety, a lack of self-esteem and feelings of guilt (McWhirter,1990). The Rio singers implied that being independent and 'alone' was typical of their experiences on the streets and being socially excluded and isolated led to feelings of being on the 'outside' and a loss of self (Bell and Walsh, 2015). Through the choir, singers have an opportunity to interact with other homeless people and

develop tolerance and understanding. These social skills may be useful and necessary for reintroduction into society.

There were inevitable tensions and social challenges within the groups. Singers were seen to fight, argue and criticise one another, and they reinforced their sense of self and by 'distancing' (Snow and Anderson, 1993) themselves from others who were homeless, outside of the singing groups. They privileged themselves in their new role of choir members against those whom they perceived as being lazy, unmotivated or unable to cope with the demands of the choir. This maintained a positive in-group identity, by discriminating against the out-group, bringing positive self-esteem and status to singers (Turner et al., 1979). Through reinforcing the distinction between themselves and non-singers, they reinforce and protect their newly constructed 'able' identity' (Magee, 2002).

Singers meet non-homeless people in a safe and nurturing environment, getting to know the choir leader and interact with audience members. Forming new relationships brings self-esteem and purpose and as the number of connections increase so does life expectancy (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2010). The term 'family' was used to describe the group across the interviews and suggests these choirs are more than just a collection of people in similar life circumstances, but there is a sense of connection, support and intimacy that comes from singing together. Singers spoke of rupture from their own blood families so the choirs may fill that gap whereby singers create a 'families of choice' (Dewaele et al., 2011, p.313). Rico cast as the father-figure and his singers become his 'kids'. The singers also spoke of a sense of belonging when talking about their choirs and this seems to be a common experience for many people who join a choir and especially for those who are more vulnerable and with experience of homelessness (Bailey and Davidson, 2005; Dingle et al., 2012; Boal-Palheiros, 2017; Nordberg et al., 2018). The singing groups, then, meets the need for connection for people who are socially excluded. For singers in a homeless choir the support they receive from each other and

positive emotions aroused from being with others is significant and more pertinent than for middle-class singers (Bailey & Davidson, 2005).

This discussion has explored how significant a sanctuary-like space is for people who are homeless in Rio. Within this safe place, singers can connect to a deeper sense of self and perform identity work. It has also argued that the groups afford the members the experience of emotional comfort, mental support and extends their social opportunities and networks. They also have an opportunity to experience activities, emotions and relationships that are 'normal' (Thomas et al., 2012b) and being treated 'like anyone else' (p.790). These all contribute to improving the life of singers (Ruud, 1997a) and bringing wellbeing (Thomas et al., 2012). They enable the singers who are homeless to see themselves 'reconnecting to mainstream society' (Bailey and Davidson, 2002, p.241) and worthy of a place in the wider community.

9.8 Conclusion

Choirs set up for people who are homeless in Rio offer a refuge and sanctuary from homelessness and life on the streets. This is critical when the experience of homelessness is so isolating and damaging to wellbeing in Rio. Singers arrive at the choirs closed and suspicious of others but make themselves emotionally and socially vulnerable. This can occur because of the love and nurture of the leaders, who focus on meeting the individual needs of the singers and offering care and support. It is also supported by the emotional engagement that the music provides. Despite the relaxed attitude to discipline and rule keeping, the choirs are an emotionally safe place. They foster positive emotions and provide a mental distraction from the harsh homeless experience, a benefit particularly relevant to this population. This all contributes to improved wellbeing.

Through emotionally opening-up, singers challenge their suspicions of other singers and develop skills of tolerance and acceptance. They also find a

deeper acceptance for themselves and explore new ways of being, though play and exploration. The singers challenge the stigma and negative connotations associated with their homeless identity and through adopting a music/ performer persona, they salvage the self (Snow and Anderson, 1993), both seeing and presenting themselves through their new able identity. This new self is formed through interactions with others and enables new meaningful relationships to be formed, with homeless and non-homeless people. These interactions help address the isolation singers experience through homelessness, bringing a sense of being part of something and belonging.

Interactions with audiences at performances are possible because of how the singers are perceived in their new musical identity. They feel visible and part of reality and there is a bridge (Bailey and Davidson, 2003) to re-engage with society. They can challenge the misconceptions and fear surrounding homelessness through their new identity and their achievements and skills are 'witnessed' (Ansdell, 2010b). The choir brings an opportunity to engage in meaningful worthwhile activities that contribute to helping them feel normal and human, contributing to improving the quality of life of group members and open new future possibilities.

Chapter 10 The Finale

This thesis has provided a unique insight into the phenomena of choirs and community singing groups set up for people who have experienced homelessness in the UK and Rio. It has explored the perceptions of the singers and staff from the groups, two people who founded organisations and one non-singer who had elected not to join a choir. It sits within music psychology, contributing to the field of music and wellbeing, and research around choirs, while adding to the discipline of Sociology, through exploring aspects of homelessness, music and relationships. While there has been a rapid rise in the number of general singing groups set up in the west (Reagon et al., 2016) and studies investigating choirs are prolific, there has been limited research around groups set up for singers who are homeless. This is despite a new international movement reflecting a growing interest in the work and an appetite for more groups to be created (Knowles, 2017; Coyne, 2018).

This research emerged from my work as the leader of a choir for singers who were homeless. It was triggered by a deepening curiosity around this group while they were involved in writing an opera and performing at the Royal Opera House and through conversations with singers about the experience of participating. I was committed to gathering accounts from different perspectives, with a focus on how the groups impact the wellbeing of singers. Three over-arching questions underpinned the research:

- How do people who have experienced homelessness understand and give meaning to the experience of group singing participation?
- What do the accounts of staff who run or support the groups and those who set them up, contribute to our understanding of these groups?
- In what ways can homeless singing groups be explored through adopting a phenomenological approach, that draws on music psychology with a sociological lens?

This chapter provides a summary of the key findings that have emerged from relevant literature and research findings and reflects on this new knowledge. It begins with an outline of the main arguments proposed from each chapter followed by a section that offers reflexivity on the findings. The main arguments from the study are then explored through two key areas. The first considers in what way a comparison between the UK and Rio findings informs our understanding of singing groups set up for people who are homeless and other general community singing groups. The other explores what this research tells us about the impact of participating on wellbeing and quality of life. The chapter will go on to consider the contribution this research will make to academic enquiry and consider the impact for those working in the third sector, both in homeless services and community music. Finally, suggestions for further research are explored.

10.1 Summary of the Thesis and the Key Findings

In Chapter 1, I provided some general context and background to the research and outlined the motivation for conducting the study. I then considered the growth of choirs in the UK and a rising interest in the correlation between wellbeing and singing. An overview of the recent homeless situation in the UK and Rio and its rapid increase followed, before considering the impact the condition has on quality of life. Both Rio and the UK have singing groups that have been set up for people who have experienced homelessness and I gave an outline of the work of organisations involved, before the emergence of the International Arts and Homelessness Movement was considered.

In Chapters 2 and 3, I focused on literature and theory that was relevant to the study. Chapter 2 explored the properties of music and group singing that make it a relevant activity for positive wellbeing and quality of life outcomes. I considered research that outlined the impact on biological factors, psychological issues, and the emotional and social implications. The small field of research exploring group singing for people who are homeless was

then examined, with a focus on the associated emotional, social and cognitive benefits. A broader investigation around music making with this population found participation brought escape; led to better coping mechanisms and capacity for change as well as feeling accepted. The research also indicated that participating in performances brought shifts in the perceptions of the audience.

In Chapter 3, I explored homelessness literature, examining the crisis in the UK and Rio, through exploring how it is defined and the different attitudes towards the condition. I considered different definitions of homelessness and how it is understood. Perspectives varied from homelessness being concerned with the lack of a home, to the condition being more about social relationships. Attitudes towards homelessness were also considered through the ways people who are homeless are discussed and researched. One perspective seeks to blame the person who is homeless, another views them as defective or ill and another perspective ascribes culpability to larger social and political forces. This chapter ends by exploring the experience of homelessness by considering the impact on relationships, addictions, negotiating space and finally by looking at stigma and identity. The research questions are then stated.

In Chapter 4, I outlined my methodological process. I argued that the procedures must take account of the lack of security, privacy, legitimacy that some of the research participants who had been homeless may have experienced, and be mindful that they may have encountered trauma, abuse and violence. The chapter outlines the chosen method that seeks to follow a 'with not for' approach (Freire, 2000) that is humanistic and ethical, and imbibes trust, respect and dignity. My constructivist relativist phenomenological approach was examined. The chapter gives a detailed account of the methods adopted to recruit the twenty seven participants and gather and analyse the data.

The findings from the UK data were presented in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8, with each uncovering a specific theme from the data.

Chapter 5 *Leave That Shit at the Door* argued that the groups are physical, symbolic, temporal and emotional spaces that remove singers from the experience of homelessness. I argue that the walls and boundaries create a sanctuary which is maintained by implicit and explicit rules, which the leader must enforce. The space provides a legitimate environment where people who are homeless can be and exist. The chapter proposes that clear rules and boundaries are particularly necessary for this singing population where challenging behaviour and psychological issues may be more prevalent than for other singers in the community. Group members may have difficulties adapting to the rules but are supported by the leader and other staff but can develop social skills, which may be transferrable beyond the group. I argue that these groups do not comply with the inclusive democratic principles of community music (Ansdell, 2010), as they depend on a hierarchy and the authority of the leader in order to maintain the symbolic walls. The groups can also ostracise and remove singers who do not uphold the rules and those who challenge the sanctuary.

In Chapter 6, *We Are Family,* I explored how the groups can offer a space for people who are homeless to form new relationships and address social isolation and exclusion. Many benefits were found from the new healthy relationships formed, including friendships, romantic relationships, a sense of belonging and feeling like part of a family. Group members can also develop social skills and a support network that brings social capital and may be beneficial beyond the group. However, conflict between singers is the most challenging aspect and staff have to reinforce the rules and boundaries in order to maintain a sense of sanctuary. The singers form positive relationships with their leader, who must perform three roles: providing care and support, enforcing rules and enabling music participation. Finally, relationships with the

celebrities and arts professionals in the SO groups who are welcomed into the sanctuary offer a means of integrating positively with society.

In Chapter 7, I explore the third of the themes in the UK data, *Feeling Better Than When You Walked In*. It considers the emotional and mental wellbeing that singers reported from participating in the groups. They disclosed a high prevalence of mental health issues in their interviews and described different types of trauma, abuse and violence that had been encountered. These health issues led to homeless for some, while for others they were a consequence of homelessness. The chapter argues that people who are homeless may have few opportunities to receive care and nurture, but within the sanctuary of the group, they can receive emotional and mental wellbeing through the care of the staff and from engaging with the music. This safe space enables the people who are homeless to make themselves emotionally vulnerable, connect to the self and play with new ways of being. They perform identity work through adopting a musical identity and rejecting the 'spoiled' (Goffman, 1968) stigmatising homeless identity. Through this 'able' personae (Magee, 2002) they can find self-worth, self-esteem and sense being more in control of life.

Chapter 8, considers the group performances as a special event through the theme, *You're Going to Notice Me*. Where people who are homeless experience feeling hidden, overlooked and ignored, I propose that public performances propel them into the spotlight where they are seen, and their existence is validated. They receive this positive feedback though performing their musical identity. The chapter argues that there are important emotional benefits from performing, with singers having the opportunity to experience pride; achievement; being the givers, rather than the people in need and experience self-esteem and self-worth. They are also a critical time for deepening relationships between people in the groups. The performances can raise challenges, especially for the group leaders who bridge the gap between the expectation of the organisations and those of the singers. The audience may gain a greater understanding of homelessness through attending

concerts and their presence is a call to action to challenge the social stigma of homelessness. The performances are a unique experience where the power imbalance between people who are homeless and those who are not homeless can be addressed.

In Chapter 9 *Singing is Life*, I explore the Rio study through four themes. The first, *Not the Same Person Afterwards* explores the emotional, mental and social benefits that the singers and leaders discussed. The second theme, *I Am Someone*, considers the group as a place of safety where singers can make themselves socially and emotionally vulnerable. Within this space, singers can connect to the self and reconstruct a musical identity. The third theme, *I Am Part of Society* proposes that the increased visibility from performing and the interactions with audiences is a bridge to re-engaging back into society. The final theme, *Tensions and Challenges*, considers conflict between the singers and the approach used by the leaders to support their members.

In the chapter I propose that the damaging personal experience of homelessness in Rio, the competition for limited resources and the social isolation, may explain the closed and defensive personae that new singers exhibit when they arrive at the choir. People who are homeless also experience great intolerance by the general public and survival depends on becoming invisible and unnoticed. The interviewees implied that people who are homeless, disconnect from their own sense of self and society. I argue that through participating in the choirs, members enter an asylum where they are removed from the damaging experience of homelessness and the social stigma, entering a safe place that they are entitled to occupy. In this sanctuary they can experience emotional and therapeutic-like benefits and become more socially open and tolerant, gaining a deeper understanding of other people. When members perform, they challenge the societal expectations of homeless and become seen, accepted and validated. The singers report that they are now seen as ‘good people’ that are lost, rather than ‘vagabonds and bums and

hobos'. The interaction with the audience forms a potential bridge for singers to feel like they are re-entering society.

10.2 Reflexivity Around the Research Process and the Research Findings

This research has adopted a reflexive approach which acknowledges how my position as the researcher has influenced the study. Chapter 2, *Methodology and Methods* outlined my ontological and epistemological position, and the relativist constructivist approach I adopted for this research. This maintains that there are multiple views and perspectives of reality and that knowledge generated is context bound and it is people who give meaning to an experience. While I am central to the research process, the knowledge is generated by the interviewees who participated in this study in conjunction with me. But my values cannot be dissociated from the research process and influence how I analysed the data and construct the findings. The findings should undergo personal and epistemological reflexive analysis (Bergold and Thomas, 2012b). Personal reflexivity considers how my expectations and assumptions shape the study, and epistemological reflexivity looks at how my theoretical decisions around my choice of research questions, data collection, analysis and writing, limit the research. I introduced myself as both a singing leader and a researcher to potential interviewees and this clearly gave me advantages in terms of access but also may have influenced what the participants chose to discuss (Duckworth, 2011). Finding the most suitable 'research persona' (Gentles et al., 2014) throughout the interviews proved to be challenging. I adopted a 'warm and supportive' (Gentles et al., 2014) manner which reflected my choir leader identity when speaking to the interviewees who had experienced homelessness, but on listening to the recordings from Rio, I reflected I had been overly familiar and it resulted in some interviews feeling too conversational. I became more detached when I began the UK interviews and my voice was less prominent, but this brought up

some difficult personal emotions when I began transcribing and felt I had been cold and detached when accounts of homelessness were discussed.

My research focus was exploring and understanding the phenomena of the homeless singing group and this was underpinned by a broad interest in the relationship between group singing and wellbeing. When the Rio findings produced such favourable findings about the choirs, I questioned whether my stated interest in wellbeing may have influenced the accounts that the singers produced. On reflection, I also think I could have spent more time with the translators informing them of my expectations of their role, as they may have assumed I was chiefly interested in understanding the positive benefits of participating. In a similar position again, I would have been more explicit about the research process to the interviewees and translators. I also should have asked the interpreters to translate the direct words of the interviewees in the first person, which would have allowed me to respond to the nuanced detail of the interviewee's answers. The time that was needed to translate the interviewees in Rio, also gave less time to explore the choir experience in detail. In order to address the overtly positive data produced by the Rio singers, new questions were introduced for the UK, asking about times the singers had found it challenging to be in the group and if they had ever thought about leaving.

Most of UK and Rio singing groups depend on capturing the positive aspects of the groups in order to secure funding, with singers regularly being asked about how they benefit from participating. When large performances are being promoted, the singers can also be interviewed by the press, with the positive impact on wellbeing being the story that journalists are hoping to find. This experience cannot be ignored when reflecting on the findings from this study. The singers know that the security of the group depends on capturing evidence that it is positive and both Elizabete in Rio and Clair in London indicated how desperate they felt when they wrongly assumed their groups might end. While deciding to include an interview with Jim, the non-member brought an

alternative perspective, interviewing ex-members might have been a way to provide a more holistic and less positive slant to the findings. The interview environment may also have impacted the singers' positive accounts, especially for SO members, who were interviewed while a member of staff was in the room or in the building. These interviews may have been perceived as an extension of the session and where no distance had been created from the culture of the organisation, there may have been less objectivity about the groups.

On reflection, the UK data draw heavily on staff and singers from SO and CWNN. These are both very well established organisations that have a clear structure with explicit rules and members are well-versed in reinforcing the culture of the organisations. For example, SO interviewees repeatedly said the groups were like a family. The two founders of SO and CWNN were also well-practised in talking about the story of their organisations and presented a clean, rehearsed account of their work. A deeper and broader understanding of the group experience might have been gained from finding other independent groups across the UK and talking to their staff, especially those who had not been involved previously in re-telling the story of the groups. The group leader Celine gave the impression that she was making sense and giving meaning to her group through the interview process and being involved in this research gave her the first opportunity to reflect on her work.

The findings from this study have had an influence 'on the researcher' (Gentles et al., 2014). As a choir leader, my understanding of the field was from a musical focus and my practise and research background was community music. The focus of this research was to explore how the groups are more than just a pleasant distraction for people who are homeless and the findings indicated that participation can have significant impact on enabling people who are homeless to develop new skills, social networks and agency to make positive life changes. However, investigating the structural issues that have led to the rise of homelessness in the UK and understanding the complexity of

the homeless experience has influenced my appreciation of what the positive potential of the singing groups may be. In the light of austerity measures and the critical housing crisis in the UK and the abject poverty experienced in Rio, the findings from this research can seem somewhat limited. How might the positive impact of participating in the music groups have any meaning when the structural barriers that maintain poverty and homelessness are unlikely to shift? Another personal reflection is how can these groups have any meaningful effect when there are so few opportunities for people who are homeless to sing together, yet the number of people experiencing homelessness is at a point of crisis? Some reassurance about the impact of the groups is found in the work of the ethnographers Snow and Anderson (1993) and Duneier (2001). They questioned how people who were homeless could find meaning in their lives, when their environment is so hostile. Snow and Anderson (1993) argued that people who are homeless will seek to 'salvage' the self and are compelled to make sense of their existence and find self-worth. This may be possible through joining with others in a homeless singing group. While their purpose is not to 'fix' homelessness (Robinson, 2002), these groups do provide a basic human right, enabling people who are homeless to engage 'in the cultural life of the community' and to 'enjoy the arts' (*United Nations: Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, n.d.). They can help singers cope with life beyond the group (Boal-Palheiros, 2017) and bring opportunities to experience wellbeing and dignity.

10.3 How the Findings Inform our Understanding of Groups Set Up for People Who Are Homeless and General Community Singing Groups

The findings from the UK and the Rio study led to the emergence of broadly similar themes. But by comparing the nuanced findings from each location against the experiences of homelessness in different countries, it brings a deeper understanding of the purpose and function of the groups. It also generates some general outcomes that may be common to all homeless

singing groups and could form the enquiry for further research. The experience of homelessness is more severe in Rio than in the UK. This is because of the social support available, the numbers of people competing for limited resources and the attitude of society. This affects how people arrive at their singing group and the impact on wellbeing from participating.

The support that people who experience homelessness in the UK can access is significantly higher than in Rio. Financial assistance from the state is available, even if people are street sleeping (*Shelter*, 2019b) and there is support with helping people access accommodation, food and showers, specific health services, money and benefit advice and support around domestic violence and incidents of rape. The attitude of the public is perhaps more tolerant compared to that in Rio, due to the work of the large homeless charities, who seek to influence public opinion (Downie et al., 2018). However, O'Neill and colleagues (2017), in a report for the charity Crisis, argue that the UK public do not view homelessness as a collective issue and the responsibility of society, but as a problem of the individual facing the condition. In contrast to the UK, the support services available in Rio are minimal. While state hostels offer some accommodation, there is no duty to house people who sleep on the streets and no statutory financial benefits. People who are homeless rely on NGOs and churches for basic needs: food, blankets and clothing. The scale of the homeless problem in Rio, the lack of resources and the risk of violence, makes the experience of homeless more severe than the UK and more akin to survival. This damaging experience is coupled with the public's negative opinion, which is 'antagonistic' towards homelessness (Heritage and Peacock, 2014) and people are 'not seen as citizens' (p.13). The experience has a negative impact on the wellbeing of singers and how they arrive at the choir. This research indicates that they are more closed and introvert than new singers in the UK. They appeared to lack social support from other people in the same homeless situation, there was little trust and people described feeling defensive.

These different homeless environments in the UK and Rio influence the impact from participating. Both studies observed their groups as being a place of removal from the experience of homelessness and within this safe place singers could experience emotional, mental and social wellbeing. The groups became places of 'other', but the leaders from the UK and Rio had different approaches to maintaining the separate space. In the UK, the focus was more on enforcing rules, with consequences for failing to comply. In Rio, the attitude to the rules was more relaxed and the approach by the leaders was to demonstrate love, empathy and nurture to help separate people from the harsh homeless experience. The UK singers did experience care and emotional support from their leaders too, but it appeared to be the rules that upheld the symbolic walls, not the care.

The social aspect of both studies made an interesting comparison. Each found that there was a sense of belonging and feeling like part of a family and this mirrored the homeless choir literature explored in Chapter 2 (Bailey and Davidson, 2003, 2005; Boal-Palheiros, 2017; Nordberg et al., 2018). This deep sense of connection to others may be an element of all homeless singing groups, and especially pertinent for a population that is socially isolated and denied access to 'normal' community activities (Thomas et al., 2012b). However, the way people who are homeless normally interact had an impact on how they arrived at the sessions and experienced different social encounters within the group. Some Rio singers, when talking about life beyond the group, often adopted a distancing approach (Snow and Anderson, 1993) to other people who are homeless. They amplified their own standing by taking a higher status position (Turner et al., 1979) and separating themselves from others whom they perceived as lazy, unmotivated, unfortunate and unreliable. Joao arrived anticipating that other members would be 'dickheads'. However, singers said they connected through talking to other groups members and learning about their homeless experience. It is interesting that no singer referred to a relationship or friendship that had formed as a result of attending. The UK singers, especially from SO, provided rich accounts of the connections

they had made within the group which were experienced as a major benefit of membership. They also referred to close relationships with other people who were homeless outside of the group. However, it was interesting that UK singer Anna adopted an attitude that was comparable to the Rio singers, taking a position that was more distant and separate. But, in line with other UK singers, Anna had very high expectations of the rules being adhered to in her group. While both studies showed that participation brought social benefits, and this might be expected across all homeless singing groups, the less intense connections made by the Rio singers may reflect the harsh, socially isolating experience of being homeless in Brazil. I suggest that the more isolating the experience of homelessness, the looser and more tentative the social connections that are made within the group.

The findings that emerged around the singer's connection to self and the group as a place to perform identity work were common to both data sets. The UK and Rio findings both showed that emotionally engaging with the music and having personal life stories and emotions validated through the lyrics was a positive experience. All the singers performed identity work shifting from the 'spoiled' (Goffman, 1968) stigmatised homeless identity to the 'able' (Magee, 2002) identity of a musician and performer. The Rio singers, however, indicated a far deeper disconnection from the self, which may be a survival strategy and reflect experiences of rejection by society and their loss of rights to free movement. It is interesting that they also projected having more agency and were more positive about their future, despite having fewer resources than UK singers to make this happen. The environment the Rio singers live in is more dangerous and impoverished and one explanation may be that there is a stronger drive for more safe and stable circumstances. Also, the choir leaders in Rio were adamant that the singers were responsible for making significant changes in their lives and taking advantage of the opportunities to challenge the view of society around homelessness. Both studies did find that these public facing events could have a critical impact on informing the public

around homelessness, but the UK data showed that there was less onus on the singers to confront society's misconceptions.

The findings from Rio and UK singing groups show more similarities than differences. People are removed from the damaging impact of homelessness into a safe space where they can experience positive social, emotional and mental elements. Where the groups foster a sense of belonging, there are tensions between members, and these must be managed by the staff. There is a shift from a damaged homeless identity to an 'able' (Magee, 2002) musical identity and singers feel validated and accepted by the audience at performances within this persona. These public concerts are a critical event for the singers who are homeless, where they can interact and confront society in a safe environment. They can offer a way back to society and singers can see themselves as people who can improve their environment and create a better society through challenging stigma. While this knowledge is not claiming to be representative of all homeless singing groups, it does begin to indicate what other groups might expect and could form the basis for future research to substantiate these findings.

This research also deepens our knowledge about general community choirs, through highlighting the effects that participation brings for more vulnerable singers: whether through experience of homelessness, trauma, grief, and mental or physical health issues. Research by Clift and Hancox (2010) argues that singers with low psychological wellbeing can experience different benefits from participating. This study proposes that singing groups can offer a sanctuary, removing singers from negative experiences beyond the group and enabling them to enter a space that offers welcome and hospitality (Higgins, 2012). The findings showed that participation can enable singers to block and forget unpleasant experiences and, for the Rio singers, who were more vulnerable by the nature of their living circumstances, it found that participating has a positive impact on mental engagement and stimulation. Singing in a group with others can help members to be distracted from negative internal

pre-occupations, bring opportunities to be mentally active and give people a positive focus. These benefits may be relevant for any vulnerable singers who seek to be removed from challenging experiences in their lives. Participation was seen to evoke feelings of joy, happiness, being relaxed and feeling better and this was evident across the data sets, supporting the argument that disadvantaged singers can improve their subjective wellbeing through group singing.

10.4 How the Findings Inform our Understanding of Singing, Wellbeing and Quality of Life

The findings from this study, indicate that singers from a homeless choir report experiencing a positive impact on their quality of life and feel better about themselves through participating. In Chapter 2, I highlighted three conceptual frameworks that offered some explanation of why singing with others might be a positive wellbeing experience of people who are homeless. The first was Diener, Oishi and Lucas' (2003) Subjective Wellbeing Model, which focused on how happiness can be achieved through enhancing the positive mood, minimising negative effect and finding life satisfaction. This model has some overlaps with the second framework, Ryff and Keyes' (1995) Psychological Wellbeing Model. This highlighted six specific dimensions for wellbeing: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, quality relationships, purpose in life and self-acceptance. The third model drew from the field of Music Therapy (Ruud, 1997a) and argued that engaging in music can improve life quality by increasing awareness of feelings, bringing agency, leading to a sense of belonging and giving meaning to a person's life. The findings have correlated with a fourth model, (Thomas et al., 2012), which explores specifically how people who are homeless experience subjective wellbeing, and this brings a further explanation to the research findings. This framework proposes that in order to experience wellbeing, a person who is homeless needs to experience safety, feel positive, have a connection to other people, while being afforded the opportunity to participate in 'normal' life. These four

models provide a guide in which to explore the wellbeing and quality of life related findings from this study

Safety and security were found to be an important factor of wellbeing for people who are homeless and Thomas and colleagues' (2012), found that people remove themselves from challenging situations to a quiet location in order to think about the future and relax. A key result from this research is that through participation people are removed from homelessness and the circumstances that hinders wellbeing to a safe and nurturing place that fosters wellbeing. The symbolic walls create a place of separation, a music asylum (DeNora, 2015) where singers experience 'respite from distress' and 'absence, or temporary abatement of pain' (p.1). People who are homeless have a legitimate right to occupy this safe space, there is no 'struggle over territory' (Snow and Anderson, 1993, p.103). They are not out of place (Kennelly and Watt, 2011), which may be experienced on the streets. Within this space they experience welcome and hospitality (Higgins, 2012). I argue that it is within this safe environment, this musical asylum, that singers are afforded the space to dislocate from homelessness and address their life quality. The symbolic walls create the space to explore emotional wellbeing and social wellbeing.

Experiencing emotional health is significant for singers who are homelessness. There may be few other opportunities to feel happiness and joy and address negative moods (Diener et al., 2003). People can 'lose' themselves and become removed from their sense of self when homeless (Thomas et al., 2012), yet both studies indicated that singers can experience a deeper connection to the self through participating in singing groups. Within the safe asylum people open-up and became emotionally vulnerable, exploring feelings aroused by the lyrics, triggering emotions from their past and present and projecting aspirations for the future. Here, singers conduct identity work: reconciling their homeless identity and constructing an 'able' positive sense of self. This 'salvaged' self allows singers to see themselves as positive and worthwhile (Charmaz, 1987). This emotional risk-taking; developing self-

awareness and self-acceptance is enabled though the care and support offered by the group leader and staff and the experience is validated through singers performing in front of an audience. This awareness of feelings was a key factor in Ruud's (1997a) model, which argues that engaging in music is an optimum environment to explore the sense of self, and Ryff and Keyes (1995) also proposed that wellbeing was achieved through self-acceptance.

The relational aspects of the wellbeing and quality of life models are also critical in relation to this research. In Chapter 3, I outlined the social isolation and exclusion that can be experienced by people who are homeless (Sanders and Brown, 2015) and indicated the complexity of the interactions, which can hold people in the homeless situation and prevent them from finding a pathway out (Boswell, 2010). The groups offer a safe place to both explore and form new relationships and group singing can be a cohesive and communicative activity (Welch, 2005). The safety of the asylum enables singers to confront and manage challenging relationships, which comes, in part, from the explicit and implicit rules and codes that help guide the groups. The role of the choir leader and other support staff enable members to manage the relational challenges and develop appropriate social skills. Connecting to other people and forming quality relationships, (Ryff and Keyes, 1995; Thomas et al., 2012b) and fostering feelings of belonging (Ruud, 1997a) all contribute to wellbeing and quality of life. Through these connections, singers may enjoy social support and the benefits of social capital beyond the group (Putnam, 1993). In relation to the definitions of homelessness explored in Chapter 3, social relationships were a prominent indicator of 'home' with many of the models (Robinson, 2002; Bell and Walsh, 2015). Ruud's (1997a) model particularly supports the argument that these singing groups can address homelessness by creating a sense of belonging that brings a 'feeling of being <<home>>' (p.95). The singing groups cannot claim to give people who are homeless a house, but they may be able to emulate the feelings of home.

The models propose that a good life has meaning and purpose (Ruud, 1997a; Ryff and Keyes, 1995) brings satisfaction (Diener et al., 2003) and enables a person who is homeless to feel normal and human (Thomas et al., 2012). These qualities all reflect the experience of participating in homeless singing groups from participants in this study. They are counter to the homeless experience, which is synonymous with social exclusion and being prevented from fully engaging in society because of poverty and stigma. For the Rio singers, the community actively rejects people who are homeless to the margins of society (Robaina, 2011) and the UK singers were described by choir leader Pete as over-looked, ignored and bottom of the pile. The singing groups, however, bring routine and structure as well as purpose and achievement for the singers. They create opportunities that other non-homeless people might find through working or engaging in community activities or belonging to families. This leads to the singers feeling 'normal' like other non-homeless people, and not inferior to the rest of society (Thomas et al., 2012). Feelings of coherence and self-worth are constantly being sought by people who are homeless (Snow and Anderson, 1993) and the singing groups can help address this through enabling them to feel they are part of society and engaging in normal valuable activities (Thomas et al., 2012).

Identity

The theme of identity has underpinned the research in Rio and the UK and is particularly relevant for people who are homeless who are 'confronted continuously with the problem of constructing personal identities' (Snow and Anderson, 1987, p.134) that do not conform to the stigmatised social norm. Through participating in the groups, singers are given the opportunity to reject the negative aspects of the socially imposed homeless identity and turn it into something positive, embracing this element of their persona (Snow and Anderson, 1993), even wearing a t-shirt to signify their belonging to this social group. This is possible through the positive association of the 'able' (Magee, 2002) musical identity, one that signifies self-worth (Snow and Anderson, 1993). This identity embodies ability and achievement and is reinforced though

interactions with other people connected to the singing groups and the audiences at performances. The audiences respond to this new persona with positive feedback, validating and witnessing it (Ansdell, 2010b). Ruud's model (1997a) proposes that music strengthens the singer's identity, which is 'connected to increased quality of life' (p.96). When the new musical identity is embodied and performed, it offers hope and it is a catalyst for action, a projection of the 'future' preferred, 'salvaged' self (Charmaz, 1995; Magee, 2017), one that has social status (DeNora, 2017b). For the singers who have experienced homelessness, they are empowered (Magee, 2017) and enabled to see a more positive future. For the audience, it can be a call to action to challenge the stigma and misconceptions around the condition.

Group leader

The role that the music leader performs in the homeless music group appears to be quite unique. This study refutes the non-hierarchical democratic theory proposed by community music theory (Higgins, 2012), arguing that a top-down power dynamic is needed to enforce the rules and hold the boundaries, so that the music-making space is a place of safety. The role is also not reflected in the more traditional formal choir leader literature, which focuses on the leadership qualities and competencies around conducting, teaching, organising and performing and not on supporting emotional wellbeing (Jucevičienė et al., 2007). These qualities are more in keeping with the competencies required of a music therapist (Ansdell, 2010a). One of the key attributes that the leader needs from the perspective of the singers in this study, is a sense of compassion and empathy around the issues associated with homelessness. They are also required to enforce rules and manage conflict and support psychological issues that require additional assistance. The hospitality and welcome that the leaders demonstrated in this study, however, is reflected in the community music theory (Higgins, 2012). Their intentions in the homeless singing group are musical, but they are also partly therapeutic, promoting health and wellbeing, they perform the role of a health

musician (Ruud, 2013). The skills that they must draw on are described by Higgins (2012) as being as varied as the tools on a Swiss Army Knife. However, Zeserson (2005, p.125) is perhaps more accurate when she compares good singing leaders to being like roadside assistance workers: with the skills of an alchemist, a musical director, a teacher, a leader, a nurturer and a healer.

The group leader plays a critical role in enabling members to experience wellbeing benefits and the relationship was described as overwhelmingly positive by the singers in the study. Through this social interaction, the singers are accepted, treated with respect and dignity, and experience emotional support. These positive relationships are significant for people who are homeless, because it is formed with someone who is not homeless, who represents the world beyond homelessness. The three key factors that make up their role is outlined in the Singing Leader Competency Model proposed in Chapter 6. They must enforce the rules and boundaries, offer care and emotional support and enable music participation. These all contribute to the positive experience of participation. It is the leader who creates the asylum-like safe space and supports the singers to adhere to appropriate social norms that may be transferable beyond the group, thus supporting the growth and development (Ryff and Keyes, 1995) of singers. Rico, the leader in Rio, demonstrated how he played a role in introducing his choir members to society and acting as a bridge between the performers and the audience. The choir leader reinforces and presents the singers in their new 'able' (Magee, 2002a) musical identity to society, overcoming 'othering' between the audience and singers (Ansdell, 2010b). They also create the opportunities for singers to engage in meaningful normalising musical activities and experience wellbeing (Diener et al., 2003).

10.5 The Contribution of the Research

Contribution to academic enquiry

This research has brought together literature concerned with music and singing, and studies relevant to the experience of homelessness. It has focused primarily on music psychology but has also drawn from the field of sociology to explore the meaning of choirs and singing groups set up for this demographic. By drawing the fields of music and homelessness together, the findings add substantial knowledge to our understanding of these groups from the perspective of members, leaders, support staff and founders, as well as a non-member, positioned outside the group. It has contributed to the very small body of research conducted with other homeless choirs and groups. This thesis has brought a perspective from the UK, a country that has led the way in modelling best practice in setting up singing groups for people who are homelessness, but has, as yet, been absent from the research field. It has also considered groups from a developing country, which has not undergone academic enquiry before now.

The qualitative phenomenological approach adopted for this study proved to uncover rich data about the choir and singing group experience. The findings confirmed that this was an ideal method for exploring an under researched field and for giving voice and agency to research participants who are vulnerable and overlooked both in society and also historically through the research process (Bergold and Thomas, 2012b). Studies looking at the impact of group singing for specific health populations were explored in Chapter 2 where some groups were set up to 'measure' an outcome (Kenny and Faunce, 2004; Skingley et al., 2013; Fancourt et al., 2016). The findings from this research demonstrate that social, emotional, mental and identity outcomes are tightly inter-related, and it is hard to separate and investigate different factors. This supports the argument proposed by DeNora (2012), that music is not a tool that be acted upon a person but must be explored within a wider cultural and social practice. The complexity of the wellbeing experience is demonstrated by singer Clair from CWNN: she was able to explore and

reconcile her feelings of sadness about her life experiences and embrace her homeless identity through emotionally exploring the content of a song, whilst interacting with an audience at a performance. The phenomenological approach enabled rich accounts such as these of the group experience to be uncovered.

Many of the experiences, both positive and negative described by the singers in this study were linked to the social aspect of the group: relationships with others in the group and those that were formed through performances. Therefore, to fully understand the real impact of singing with others, groups that have been set up to meet the needs of a population should lead the research enquiry, rather than designing a short term artificial research environment that is not focused on creating a community. Wellbeing benefits cannot be investigated in any meaningful way when a research environment has been artificially created to explore a musical 'intervention'. Music is an embodied social activity (DeNora, 2015) and musicians are complex multifaceted beings. In order to look at wellbeing and music, a person's lived experience must be considered, along with the environment and the culture in which the music is being created (DeNora, 2015).

This research reflects many of the findings that emerged from the seven studies outlined in Chapter 2, that investigated homeless choirs and singing groups for people who have experienced homelessness. It mirrors the emotional, social and mental outcomes previously highlighted, but offers a more complex and nuanced understanding due to the depth of enquiry and the breadth of the twenty-seven research participants who experience the group from different perspectives. This research explores both the benefits and the challenges around participating. While previous studies referred to some identity work taking place as a result of participating in the group (Boal-Palheiros, 2017), in this research I propose that the singers reconcile their homeless identity by constructing a musical identity and this is a major finding from the studies. This shift has been observed in the disability and music

research (MacDonald and Meill, 2002), but not fully explored in the homeless music literature. This research also adds a deeper understanding to the experience of performing (Bailey and Davidson, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2005; Boal-Palheiros, 2017; Nordberg et al., 2018), and I propose that performances can be a critical opportunity for the new reconciled homeless identity to be witnessed and reinforced. They can be a bridge for singers to feel normal (Thomas et al., 2012) and part of society and catalyst for action for performers and audience members.

This research makes a new critical contribution to this small research field, by proposing to answer the 'how' question: *how* do these singing groups enable participants to experience these positive outcomes? I argue that the groups remove singers from the experience of homelessness and separate them into a safe place. It is because they are positioned within the asylum-like sanctuary they are afforded the opportunity to become emotionally vulnerable and undertake risk work. The singers can re-connect to their sense of self and reconcile their homeless identity, constructing an 'able' persona linked to positive emotional states, such as self-esteem and pride. This place of security enables them to 'play' (DeNora, 2015) with others and to engage in new relationships. The presentation of this new self at performances and the relationships formed with the audiences offers a meaningful link to society.

The critical role that the choir leader plays in enabling the positive outcomes is a further contribution to the field. The Singing Leader Competency Model demonstrates that the role demands three different requirements when leading a group with singers who have experienced homelessness. The rules and boundaries must be enforced, and care and nurture offered in order to fulfil the musical outcomes. This challenges the recognised community music theory (Higgins, 2012) and argues that music-making groups with people who are homeless do not reflect a non-hierarchical democratic space, but require strong leadership and a rigid power dynamic, which reinforces the group as a place of safety.

Contribution to the third sector

In 2018 I conducted a review of music, arts and homeless organisations, with a team of co-researchers who had experienced homelessness. We found that there is an appetite for more music-making groups to be created for people who are homeless in the UK (Coyne, 2018). Some of the barriers that were identified in the research for setting up further singing groups were the lack of facilitators able to deliver the work; few opportunities for community musicians to engage in formal training and challenges around sourcing funding. The research findings for this study can play a critical role in supporting the emergence of new groups.

While the research focus for this thesis did not explicitly seek to create a model of best practice for singing groups set up for people who are homeless, it has highlighted some key factors that may support the emergence of new groups, especially those looking to support wellbeing. It has indicated that there are optimum requirements when setting up a group and key skills required of leaders. This is to offer tailored support for people who may have experienced trauma, abuse and neglect and may present with behavioural and psychological issues. The skill set of the group leader is crucial to the success of a group, and the Singing Leader Competency Model has proposed that leaders must fulfil three components to support this singing population. Creating rules and boundaries around the group is essential, as well as the singers experiencing care for and support. Appropriate repertoire is also an important factor within the group. It provides the opportunity for singers to engage in deep cognitive work, to mentally block or forget challenging thoughts or emotions and experience emotional repair.

As the relational aspect of participating is so key to the group experience, opportunities for interaction and connection between singers are critical. SO and CWNN appoint members as ambassadors to welcome and integrate new members and CWNN have a meal associated with their weekly rehearsal, which reinforces the social bond between the singers and the staff. The group

leader should play a role in encouraging and supporting healthy interaction between singers and building a community. Performances were a critical part of the group singing experience for all the members interviewed, except Anna, and should be considered an important part of the singing group experience. They brought a safe opportunity for society and the people who have experienced homelessness to meet and interact in a meaningful way. Finally, the success of groups depends on consistency and operating on a long-term basis. Singers were anxious about their perceived expectation that the groups might end and were unsettled by staff changes and holidays and breaks.

Some of these optimum aspects of delivering a successful singing group with people who are homeless, could be transferred to suit any arts practice or group activity with this population. The Singing Leader Competency Model could be adapted to facilitate art, drama, instrumental music, dance, poetry, creative writing or gardening groups. The facilitator can support the wellbeing of participants through enforcing the rules and boundaries and creating a safe space, whilst showing care and nurture to the group. Although the activity does not involve group singing, some of the same positive outcomes could be achieved through enabling social integration between participants and the leader and encouraging the group to engage with sympathetic people from the wider society. These group activities can enhance the wellbeing of participants through creating opportunities for people who are homeless to feel 'normal' (Thomas et al., 2012).

The findings from this study can also contribute to the work being delivered within the homeless sector, creating social opportunities for people to enhance positive emotions and feel good about themselves (Thomas et al., 2012). Through this research, I propose that when people who are homeless engage in activities that focus on skill and achievement rather than place them in a position of need, they experience wellbeing and it has a positive impact on their identity and future self. The study has highlighted the importance of enabling positive healthy relationships with other people who are homeless

within a safe supported environment. These interactions may lead to singers forming a supportive social network, enjoying social capital (Putnam, 1993) and increasing their chances of holding onto a tenancy and not returning to homelessness (Boswell, 2010). The need for social and creative groups to have strong leadership has been identified in this research and may be transferrable to other homeless services. Skilled leaders can enforce rules and boundaries which enable appropriate social behaviour, whilst also showing care and compassion. This combination creates an environment where people who are homeless can challenge the stigma of homelessness and may be supported to imagine a possible future beyond their current situation. Where people who are homeless are given the opportunity to engage in meaningful interactions with society, this can have a positive impact on challenging misconceptions around the condition. The International Arts and Homelessness movement released The Jigsaw of Homeless Support (With One Voice, 2019b), which proposes that there are multiple challenges and needs for people who are homeless, and the services that are offered need to reflect the complex experience. They argue that services which address direct need are traditionally prioritised, but other activities, such as the arts should be available and considered with equal merit, as they increase wellbeing, social inclusion and self-expression. Being involved in creative outlets can lead to a positive identity and challenge public perceptions. This research provides vigorous research to support The Jigsaw of Homeless Support model, and the arts as a legitimate homeless service.

10.6 Recommendations for Further Research

A PhD study is a bespoke project and while there are limitations with the process, the findings inevitably bring further questions and new directions for future research. This study has made a vital contribution to the small research field of singing and homelessness and it is timely that further work should be conducted in this area. The findings should be substantiated with further research in the UK, using the qualitative approach adopted in this study.

Exploring the groups as a place of 'other' and separation from homelessness is a new concept, and further research to investigate this from the perspective of singers and staff, would help support these findings and develop the concept. The Singing Leader Competency Model also requires deeper exploration and should be explored with singers and leaders. This could help expand the idea and bring further understandings about how the leader is critical to singers experiencing wellbeing. In order to include the voices or the research participants who are homeless more fully, a community based participatory research approach might be an appropriate method to explore in the future. This would empower people who are homeless and ensure they have a deeper control over the research process (Freire, 2000) and their knowledge is validated and they could author their own work.

This field would also benefit from a mixed method longitudinal study that explores the profiles of individual singers. This could consider if there are specific stage within homelessness, that people choose to access a group and look at how long they remain a member. It could also explore the impact of participation after three months, six months, twelve months, then each year, focusing on the impact on wellbeing and quality of life and whether participation has been a catalyst for positive life transitions. This would help build a more complete picture of the singing group experience in the UK and support those looking to set up new groups. The research with audiences at music events is very scant and nothing, as yet, has been conducted at concerts where people who have experienced homelessness are performing. The findings from this study around performances were based on the perceptions of the singers and staff. But a mixed method study exploring the attitudes towards people who are homeless, before and after a performance and three months after an event, would give an indication if there were, indeed, positive attitudinal changes by an audience towards people who are homeless.

Currently, there have only been studies with groups in the USA, Canada, Australia, Portugal and now the UK and Brazil, yet there are many more groups

worldwide (*With One Voice*, 2019c). It would be pertinent to conduct further qualitative studies with other international groups and investigate whether the findings from this study apply across other homeless singing populations. This research could inform the creation of a new choir for people who are homeless. drawing on the best practice identified and be the guide for a long-term research project. A co-production approach could be adopted with group members of the new choir, where they are co-researchers and aiding in the generation of new knowledge in this field.

10.7 And Finally…

This study has investigated choirs and singing groups for people who have experienced homelessness in the UK and Rio and made a vital contribution to an under-researched field. It does not attempt to argue that music is a magic bullet to 'fix' homelessness (Robinson, 2002), but provides evidence from the perceptions of singers, leaders and staff that the groups play a significant role in impacting members wellbeing and self-worth and are much more than a pleasant distraction from the damaging experiences of homelessness. The UK charity Shelter (2019a), describes homelessness as a national emergency and one of the biggest social issues in the UK; with six million households denied a safe home or at threat of losing their accommodation. When people are denied a place to live, their quality of life is impacted, and they are unable to thrive or fulfil their potential (Shelte*r*, 2019a). The findings of this research are especially pertinent given the current crisis. Activities that improve the wellbeing and quality of life for this population, may play a crucial role in addressing some of the social and psychological issues related to the condition. Homeless singing groups remove members to a safe space where they are emotionally and mentally supported and given the opportunity to explore aspects of themselves and construct a positive identity. The groups are complex and fragile and managing the social relationships and maintaining the safe space requires compassionate staff and strong leadership. The asylum-like sanctuary of the singing groups provides singers with an

opportunity to experience self-worth and to challenge the stigma associated with poverty and homelessness. They enable people who are homeless to interact and connect with others and experience a sense of belonging, emulating feelings of ‘home’.

Appendix 1

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Participant Information Sheet

Introduction:

My name is Shelly Coyne and I am a doctoral student at the University of Edinburgh, based in the Reid School of Music. I have been a choir leader for over 15 years with an interest in singing as a tool for integration and social inclusion, improving wellbeing and helping address poverty. My work as a practitioner has led me to conduct research investigating choirs and community singing groups for people who have experienced homelessness and exploring the role participation plays in the life of the singer.

Who Can Take Part?

- Are you a singer in a choir or a community singing group and have personal experience of homelessness?
- Do you work as a choir leader, workshop leader or support worker or have you set up a singing group for people who have experienced homelessness?

If you would like to share your knowledge and contribute to this research, then please do get in touch. Participation is completely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any point in the study.

How Can I Get Involved?

There are two ways you can get involved:

- If you sing in a group, I would like to come and hear you rehearse and perform and with if I receive permission, I may film these events and take photographs.
- If you are a singer or work in this field, I would like to come and chat to you about your experiences and conduct a one to one interview. We would meet at a time that is mutually convenient and the interview would last around one hour. The conversations will be recorded on a hand-held voice recorder.

What Will Happen to The Recordings?

The interviews and any photographs or film footage will be used to write a publicly available thesis and contribute to publications, presentations and other research dissemination associated with this study. I am exploring the option of putting some of the interviews, films and photographs into a community archive where they will be publicly available.

Giving Consent

There is a consent form, where you can select your level of involvement: whether you wish to remain anonymous: how your data is used; what ultimately will happen to your contribution and whether you give permission for it to be stored in a community archive.

Are there any risks to taking part?

There are no identified risks to you participating in this research
This study has received ethical approval from the Edinburgh College of Art.

Further Information

If you would like to find out more about this research, please get in touch with me or one of my supervisors.

Prof. Raymond MacDonald Raymond.MacDonald@ed.ac.uk
Dr. Niamh Moore Niamh.Moore@ed.ac.uk
Dr. Katie Overy K.Overy@ed.ac.uk

THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
Edinburgh College of Art

Consent Form

Singing and Homelessness: A study of choir and community singing participation for singers who have experienced homelessness.

If you would like to be involved in this research project, then your consent is needed.
Please read each of the following statements and only tick the boxes that apply.

I confirm that I have understood the information sheet and the researcher has answered any queries to my satisfaction.	
I understand the interviews and film footage will be used to write a publicly available thesis and contribute to publications, presentations and other research dissemination associated with this research project.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, without having to give a reason and without any consequences.	

I agree to be filmed and photographed during performances and rehearsals.	
I agree to film footage and photographs being shown publicly.	

I understand that my interview, photographs and film footage may be added to a community archive where it will remain publicly available.	

Please tick one of the following:

I want my contribution to remain anonymous and my real name not to be used.	
I'm happy for my real name to be used.	

Signature of Participant:

Signature of Researcher:

Date:

Appendix 2

THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
Edinburgh College of Art

Iinstitute for Music in Human and
Social Development
Reid School of Music
Edinburgh College of Art
The University of Edinburgh
Alison House
12 Nicolson Square
Edinburgh
EH8 9DF

Shelly.Coyne@ed.ac.uk

10/07/2016

Ficha de Informação de Participante

Introdução:

Meu nome é Shelly Coyne e sou estudante de doutorado pela Universidade de Edimburgo, na Escola de Música Reid. Trabalho como líder de coral há 15 anos, com interesse na arte do cantar como ferramenta para integração e coesão, promovendo o bem-estar e combatendo a pobreza e o isolamento social. Meu trabalho como regente me levou a desenvolver o projeto de pesquisa intitulado **Situação de rua e o cantar: um estudo sobre a participação, em coral comunitário, de cantores que já foram moradores de rua** (em inglês, *Homeless and singing: a study of community choir participation for singers who have experienced homelessness).*

O presente estudo foi aprovado pelo comitê de ética do Colégio de Arte de Edimburgo.

Participação:

- Você é, ou já foi, um cantor de coral que viveu em situação de rua?
- Você trabalha, seja como voluntário, líder de coral ou coordenador de projeto, com pessoas que já passaram pela experiência de moradores de rua e participaram de um coral?

Se você gostaria de compartilhar sua experiência e contribuir para o conhecimento acerca deste tema, por favor entre em contato. A participação é totalmente voluntária e, caso mude de ideia, você pode desistir de participar a qualquer momento durante o estudo.

Como posso participar?

Há duas maneiras para participar deste projeto:

- Se você canta em um coral, eu gostaria de ouvi-lo durante um ensaio ou apresentação. Com a sua devida autorização, posso fazer breves filmagens e tirar algumas fotografias.
- Se você é cantor ou atua no ramo, eu gostaria de conversar com você acerca de suas experiências. Podemos organizar uma entrevista particular ou mesmo uma conversa em grupo. A conversa será registrada com um gravador de voz digital portátil.

Para que estas informações serão utilizadas?

As entrevistas e filmagens serão usadas para escrever uma tese, que será disponível publicamente. Também poderá ser usada em publicações acadêmicas e outras apresentações relacionadas a esse projeto de pesquisa.

Anuência de consentimento

Há um formulário de consentimento bastante detalhado, a partir do qual você poderá selecionar seu grau de envolvimento com o projeto; se deseja permanecer anônimo; como seus dados serão usados; e quais serão os resultados de sua contribuição. Há a possibilidade de as filmagens e transcrições de entrevistas serem destinadas a um arquivo comunitário.

Há algum risco envolvido ao participar?

Não há nenhum risco identificado com relação à participação nesta pesquisa.

Outras informações

Se você gostaria de saber mais a respeito deste estudo, por gentileza entre em contato comigo ou com meus supervisores:

Prof. Raymond MacDonald Raymond.MacDonald@ed.ac.uk

Dr. Niamh Moore Niamh.Moore@ed.ac.uk

Dr. Katie Overy K.Overy@ed.ac.uk

THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
Edinburgh College of Art

Formulário de Consentimento

Situação de rua e o cantar: um estudo sobre a participação, em coral comunitário, de cantores que já foram moradores de rua.

Se você gostaria de participar deste estudo, seu consentimento é necessário. Por gentileza, leia as afirmações a seguir e assinale as que se aplicam a você.

Confirmo que li e entendi as informações deste formulário e a pesquisadora esclareceu minhas eventuais dúvidas de modo satisfatório.	
Entendo que entrevistas e filmagens serão usadas para escrever uma tese que será disponível publicamente, assim como outras publicações, apresentações e demais materiais de disseminação associados a este projeto de pesquisa.	
Entendo que minha participação é voluntária e sou livre para deixar de contribuir com o projeto a qualquer momento, não precisando para isso apresentar quaisquer justificativas e não havendo quaisquer consequências.	

Quero que minha contribuição permaneça anônima e que meu nome verdadeiro não seja usado.	
Tudo bem que meu nome verdadeiro seja usado.	

Concordo em ser filmado e fotografado durante apresentações e ensaios.	
Concordo que filmagens e fotografias sejam exibidas publicamente.	

Entendo que minha contribuição pode ser adicionada a um arquivo comunitário, onde permanecerá disponível publicamente.	

Assinatura do participante:

Assinatura do pesquisador:

Data:

Appendix 3

THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH
Edinburgh College of Art

EDINBURGH COLLEGE *of* ART
The University of Edinburgh
Evolution House
78 West Port
Edinburgh EH1 2LE

University Switchboard +44 131 650 1000
http://www.ed.ac.uk/eca

11th April 2016

Ethics Approval – Shelly Coyne

To whom it may concern,

This letter is to confirm that Shelly Coyne has completed the level 2 ethics clearance procedure as part of Edinburgh College of Art's PhD ethics review process, and this has been approved by the ECA Postgraduate Office.

Should you require further information do please contact me.

Dr Craig Martin,
Deputy Director Postgraduate Studies, Edinburgh College of Art

Appendix 4

Interview Questions for Group Members

Section 1 – Background - Homelessness and Singing

Can you tell me a bit about your group?

- *Prompt - How did you end up coming along? Where and when is it? Who comes? How many people? What staff are involved?*

Can you tell me why you joined?

- *Prompt - Did you have any expectations of what it might be like? Who invited you or told you about it? How did you hear about it? Did it turn out to be what you expected?*

I wonder what it was like coming to a rehearsal/ workshop for the first time?

Would you tell me a bit about your life before you joined the group?

If you are comfortable to, I wonder if you can tell me about becoming homeless?

Section 2 – The Group

Could you describe a typical rehearsal/workshop?

- *Prompt – Where do people stand or sit? Can you say something about the music/lyrics/is here an accompanist? What is the mood or atmosphere like? What is the shape of the rehearsal - warm up, songs, break etc.*

Can you tell me about the other singers?

- *Prompt – Age/ social mix/ health/ sex/ attitude to others. Is there a high turn-over of members or is there consistency?*

Can you tell me more about the musical side of things?

- *Prompt- Repertoire/ harmonies/song choices.*

Could to say how you feel when you're singing?

- *Prompt – Are those feelings from the singing itself or from singing in a choir? Do you sing anywhere else?*

Could you tell me about your group leader/s?

- *Prompt – Are there specific skills or qualities they need to do their job? Are there things that you like / don't like, that they do?*

Are your group involved in concerts? Could you tell me about a particularly memorable concert or performance you were involved in?

- *Prompt – Where was it? How did the audience respond? What were your feelings and expectations?*

Section 3 – Self Reflection

If you were going to encourage a friend to join your group, what would you say to sell it to them?

Has there ever been a time when you've not felt like coming or wanted to leave?

Do you have any friends or family who take the mickey out of you singing in your group?

Do you think there are (further) benefits to being in your group?

Finally, is there anything I haven't asked you about being in your group, that you would like to add before we finish?

Interview Questions for Group Leaders and Support Workers

Section 1 – Background

Could you begin by telling me a bit about the journey of how you became a choir leader/ workshop leader/ support worker?

- *Prompt –background experience/ formal or informal training*

Could you tell me how you came to be running a group / supporting a group for people who have experienced homelessness?

- *Prompt - What motivated to work with this group? How did you find out about the job? Have you done this work before? Do you receive training or mentoring?*

Section 2 – The Group

Do you work with more than one singing groups for people affected by homelessness?

Can you tell me a bit about your rehearsals/ workshops?

- *Prompt – The structure – eg. warm-ups/ repertoire/ types of songs. How the singers are positioned - standing/ sitting? What is the room like? Do you have a tea break / meal?*

Are there other colleagues that work with you in your group?

How are people recruited to your group?

- *Prompt – posters/ word of mouth/ social media/ attending concerts/ gate-keepers at homeless centres/ advocates amongst the homeless community? Which is the most successful method? Are there incentives to come?*

Can you tell me about the members of your group?

- *Prompt – Numbers, the average each week/ their commitment /sex/age. How might you describe the* social mix /health?

I wonder if you have a sense what their views and attitudes were to singing/choirs/opera before they arrived and at that first rehearsal.

If I didn't know anything about your group and was thinking about joining, how would you describe the musical side of things and the repertoire?

- *Prompt – Repertoire/ harmonies/ how are songs chosen? Is there musical accompaniment?*

So, what sort of concerts have your group been involved with?

What role would you say they play in shaping the singing year?

Do things change in the group as you prepare for a concert?

Do you see any differences between singing at a concert compared to singing at the rehearsal/ workshop for your members?

Section 3 - Self – Reflection

I wonder if you could talk about what skills and qualities a group leader needs to run a group?

- *Prompt – Qualities specific to this singing population compared to other singing groups. The impact of the individual leader on the members. (What are the challenges/joys for them in this role?)*

What are the challenges for you in your role?

- *Prompt – How do you look after yourself in this job? Support networks? Line management? Resilience.*

What are the joys?

I've been asking group members: if you were to encourage someone else to come along, how would you describe the group and what would you say to encourage them along? I wonder what your thoughts are on this.

Are there are further benefits from being in your group for the members?

Do you think there are any negative aspects to participating?

Finally, is there anything that hasn't come up yet that you think is important about the groups?

Interview Questions for SO and CWNN Organisation Founders

Section 1 – Background

Could you begin my telling me a bit about yourself and your journey to setting up SO/CWNN?

- *Prompt - How did you get involved with music groups for people who have experienced homelessness? Can you say something about the motivation for working with this particular group?*
-

Section Two – The Group

Could you say something about the staffing of your groups?

- *Prompt - What do you think is the ideal set-up? What worked, what didn't? Have you made changes to your practice over time and why? Have things worked in one place but not another?*

What about your rehearsals/ workshops – have you been involved in shaping the structure and content – what do you think is the optimum set up and why?

- *Prompt – shape of the rehearsal/workshop, the structure – eg. warm up/ easy part songs/ complexity of the songs? How are singers are positioned - standing/ sitting. Choice of venue. Is there a tea break or a meal?*

How are people recruited to your groups?

- *Prompt – posters/ word of mouth/ social media/ attending concerts/ gate keepers at homeless centres/ advocates amongst the homeless community? Which is the most successful method? Are there Incentives to come?*

Can you tell me about the members of your groups?

- *Prompt – Numbers, the average each week/ their commitment /sex/age. How might you describe the* social mix /health?

I wonder if you have a sense what their views and attitudes were to singing/choirs/opera before they arrived and at that first rehearsal.

If I didn't know anything about your group and was thinking about joining, how would you describe the musical side of things and the repertoire?

- *Prompt – Repertoire/ harmonies/ how are songs chosen? Is there musical accompaniment*

So, what sort of concerts have your groups been involved with?

What role would you say they play in shaping the singing year?

Do you think there are any differences between singing at a concert compared to singing at the rehearsal/workshop for your members?

Section Three - Self – Reflection

I wonder if you could talk about what skills and qualities a group leader needs to run a group?

- *Prompt – Qualities specific to this singing population compared to other singing groups. The impact of the individual leader on the members*

What do you see as are the challenges in the role?

What are the joys?

I've been asking group members: if you were to encourage someone else to come along, how would you describe the group and what would you say to encourage them along? I wonder what your thoughts are on this.

Are there are other benefits to being in your group for singers?

Do you think there are any negative aspects to participating?

Finally, is there anything that hasn't come up yet that you think is important about the groups?

Appendix 5

Codes for UK Staff

Organisation Founder
Motivation to set up organisation
Ability, skills and connections
Plans, visions and serendipity
An arts and homeless movement
Value of the arts

Views around homelessness
Public view of homelessness
Barrier between public and people EH*
Raising awareness of homelessness
Shifting attitudes to homelessness
Differing stages of homelessness
Hierarchy of need
Identifying the needs of people with EH
Meeting basic needs
Progression through homelessness

People with EH
Lack of belief in self
Lack of opportunity to demonstrate achievements
Feeling useless/being seen as useless
Socially isolated
Family breakdown
Ignored and bottom of the pile
People with EH as a distinct group
People with EH not listened to
Memory and communication problems
Issues around concentration and focus
People with EH being failed
Challenges and chaos beyond the group
Anonymity and homelessness
Belief in self
Find your voice
Good judge of character and mood
Valuing the voice and opinions of people with EH

Group members
Characteristics of members
Members needs and difficulties like those of children music-makers
Criteria for group membership
Challenging the members
Working backstage or directing
Skills developed through participation
Recognising achievements and skills
Participation and dignity
Meeting members where they're at
Choice of members to attend
Losing members and progression
Damaging group reputation
Rejected by the group

Identity work
Identity work – members
Identity work – staff
Group identity
Pride in homeless identity
Identity of the group
Unlocking the identity of members
Damaged identity

Staff
Staff as rule enforcer
Staff in music enabling role
Staff in organisational role
Staff in support or care role
Staff job structures
Staff modelling good group 'behaviour'
Staff enabling appropriate behaviour
Staff musical background
Staff job structure
Staff training and support
Impact of participation on staff
Challenges with staff role
Group Leader's impact on group dynamics
Staff musical background
Session leader skills and qualities
Session leader planning and structure
Flexibility of leaders
Integrity and honesty of session leader
Staff love of job
Impact of staff personality on the group
Role of volunteers
Differences between staff
Recruiting staff
Staff experience of working in the homeless sector
Thanks, and acknowledgement
Staff experience of being in a singing group
Bringing no pre-conceptions to the work
Role of the centre staff
Sense of empathy

Relationships
Relationships between staff and members beyond the group
Relationships between staff and members in the group
Connection between leaders and members
Members relationships with other arts professionals
New relationships
Relationships between members
Tensions between members
Support between members
Connection to others
Friendship and intimacy between members

The Wider Organisation and its groups
Values and aims of the organisation
Branding
Organisations staffing model
Regional distinctiveness and identity
Connected to a wider organisation
Publicity and promotion
Recruitment practices
Gathering information about members
Session structure
Issues around funding
Evaluating and learning
Failure and learning
Consistency and continuation
Long term embedded work
Identifying the needs of members
The arts to meet the needs of members
Homeless only/ integrated groups
Bringing transformation
Challenges for the organisation
Distinctiveness of each group
New skills and achievements
Collective goals
Consistency and continuity
Issues around venues
Homeless group V Integrated group
Relationships with other organisations
Listening to the opinions and voice of members
Group as a metaphor for a functioning society and people

The group
Use of humour
Meeting members where they're at
Agency of members
Atmosphere in session
Gratitude and thanks
Receiving praise
Characteristics of the group
Inclusive
Safe space and sanctuary
Welcome and hospitality
Sense of family
Sense of trust
Sense of belonging
Connection to others
Social inclusion
Social impact
Sense of fun
Rules and boundaries
Agency of members
Autonomy of members
Wellbeing through participation
Visibility and recognition
Sharing a meal / free food
Sense of purpose and responsibility
Sense of community / building community
Sense of togetherness
Confidence and self-esteem building
Bonding experience
Roles played my members in the group
Feelings of pride
Group being engaging for members
Place of 'other'
Understanding culture
Bringing transformation
Shared experience
Belonging and ownership
Feelings of home
Collective goals
Group as an escape
Routine and structure
'Buzz' from singing and performing
Impact of rehearsals on non-group members
Integrity and honesty of members
Joy of singing
Singing and memory
Feeling nervous
Singing to forget
Sense of achievement
Lack of empathy
Patience for other members
Opportunities to give and share
Sense of flow and mindfulness

Learning opportunities
Listening to others
The group as a life-line
Patience with other members
Members distancing from homelessness
Loss of self-consciousness
Feelings of achievement

Challenges
Challenges in the group
Challenging expectations
Members bring problems from outside the group
Language barrier
Issues of racism

Music
Musical excellence
Impact of opera
Impact of music – positive
Impact of music – negative
Repertoire choices
Terminology of the music and opera
Vocal improvements of members
Music to lose yourself
Music for emotional expression and exploration
Impact of lyrics
Repertoire choices
Opera and song writing opportunities
Issues around members musicality

Beyond the music
Storytelling acting and movement
Working backstage or directing
Group trips
Placements and volunteering

Performances
Positive audience response
Members performing with professional musicians
Impact of performances – positive
Challenges and issues around performance
Cross organisational performances
Opportunities to sing solo
Performances exceed the rehearsal

Health
Health issues of members
Addiction issues
Keeping physically active
Supporting mental health
Mental health issues

Wider impact
Community cohesion

Codes for UK Members

Codes relating to experiences beyond the group
Homelessness in childhood
Childhood sexual abuse
Challenging childhood
Family tensions
Family breakdown
Relationship breakdown
Domestic abuse
Relationship with kids
Illness of kids
Challenges of parenting
Lack of safety and security
Lack of stability
Feelings of guilt
Distancing from 'other' homeless
Homeless support
Breaking the law
Issues of blame around homelessness
Issues of shame
Feelings of isolation
Homelessness and violence
Suicide
PTSD
Violence and violations
Verbal abuse
Sexual abuse as an adult
Time in prison
Loss of job
Feelings of rejection
Lacking self esteem
Lack of achievement
Lack of purpose
Insecure housing
Secure housing
Poor housing
Challenges of homelessness
People with EH as a distinct group
Connection between similar groups of people
Informing the public about homelessness
Positives of homelessness
Use of humour
Skills of people with EH
Gratitude and thanks
Membership of other groups and activities
Sense of belonging outside of the group
Safe environment outside of the group
Stuck in life
Support outside of the group
Celebrating others success
Problems outside of the group
Lack of support outside the group
Transition from homeless to mainstream services
Keeping busy
Things to look forward to
Resilience in homelessness
'Normal' people don't understand us

Staff and Organisation Related Codes
Session leader skills and qualities
Staff as rule enforcer
Staff in music enabling role
Staff in organisational role
Staff in support or care role
Staff meet members where they're at
Staff with similar experiences/issues as members
Staff job structures
Staff modelling 'behaviour'
Staff musical background
Staff training and support
Group leaders impact group dynamics
Impact of participation on staff
Staff love of job
Role of volunteers
Staff impact on emotions and mood
Values of the organisation
Gender preferences towards staff
Members attitude towards staff – positive
Members attitude towards staff – negative
Changing attitudes towards staff
Challenges in the organisation
Structure of the organisation
Values of the organisation
Belonging to /ownership of the organisation

Relationships
Relationship between staff and members beyond group
Relationship between staff and members in the group
Relationships between members
Tensions between members
Sense of belonging
Sense of family
Sense of community
New relationships
Social impact
Friendships between members
Romantic relationships between members
Interacting with 'famous' people
Changing attitudes towards members
Friendship and intimacy between members
Support between members
Members socialising beyond the choir
Connection to others
Competition between singers

Benefits
Agency of members
Arts can unblock
Arts to help 'find' your voice and yourself
Autonomy of singers
Benefits of participating beyond the group
Acceptance from performers
Confidence and self-esteem building
Sense of flow
Feelings of comfort
Recognising skills, achievements and knowledge
Cognitive effect
Feeling special
A catalyst
Issues around stability

Leaving difficulties at door
No financial cost to members

The Session
Recruitment practises
Assessing the venue
Incentives to join and commit
Atmosphere in the group
Characteristics of the group
Distinctiveness of each group
Structure of session
Sharing a meal / free food
Safe space and sanctuary
Welcome and hospitality
Safe environment
Non-judgemental environment
Motivation to join
Resistance to joining or joining in
Initial fear of participation
Group expectations challenged
Consistency and continuity
Hard work

Group members
Impact of participation on members
Choice of group members to attend
Characteristics of members
Support between members
Tensions between members
Members bring problems from outside the group
Musical background of members
Collective goals
Shifting mood of singers
Positive emotions
Trust in the musical process by members
Feelings of pride
Feelings of achievements
Feeling wanted and needed
Roles played by members in the group
Members treated equally
To love and to be loved
Not judging self
Wellbeing through participation
Lack of pressure on members
Reciprocity between members and others
Sense of purpose
Cognitive effect
Sense of ownership
Feeling understood
'Normal' people don't understand us
Patience for other members
Social integration
Shy or withdrawn
Lack of motivation
Receiving praise
Memory and reminiscence (link to the past)
Different cultures

Challenges
Issues of racism
Losing members
Challenges in group
Challenges with staff role
Challenging expectations
Challenges with performing
Challenging expectations
Short term benefits
Death of members
Impact on motivation
Understanding culture
Challenges with communication
Language barrier
Visibility and recognition
Members pulled back to the group
Motivation to learn
Issues of dependency
Life changes
Damaging group reputation

Group Work
Hidden by the group
Impact of being in a group
Rules and boundaries
Inclusivity
Collective goals
Conflict resolving
New opportunities
Bringing Transformation
Feelings of home
Publicity and promotion
Responsibility
Shared experience
Emotional connection
Positive anticipation
Learning opportunities

Identity
Identity work - members
Identity work – staff

Singing Acting Opera
Storytelling, acting and movement
Use of drawing
Impact of music - negative
Impact of music - positive
Impact of opera
Ownership of music or performance
Repertoire choices and responses
Impact of lyrics
Singing for somebody
Singing as a drug
Singing to forget
Singing as a gift
Singing to prevent certain negative behaviour
Singing for me
Singing to become someone else
Pitch and rhythm
Impact of warm-ups
We can all sing
Song writing opportunities
Repertoire choices

Health and Emotional Health
General health issues
Mental health relief
Mental health issues
Addictions issues

Learning issues
Issues around anger
Voice damage
Behavioural issues
Relief from pain
Self-harm
Not looking after yourself

Performances
Performances and their impact – positive
Performances and their impact -negative
Performance opportunities
Performances enhancing group relationships
Positive audience response
Feeling nervous at performances
Family response to performances
Members performing with professional musicians

Events beyond rehearsals and performances
Trips for the group
Placement opportunities

Language
Use of metaphor
Language that belittles the artistic experience

Codes for Jim

Childhood
Poor school experience

Musician
Musical identity
Guitar player
Dedication and commitment
Sense of flow
Musical mindfulness
Out of body experience

Negative singing experience
Negative childhood singing experience
I don't like singing I don't like songs!
Negative views of choirs

Positive singing experience
Non-judgemental environment
Positive group singing experience
Emotional connection

Homeless Day Centre
Judgemental environment
Financial incentives to join groups
Lack of knowledge of activities in the centre
Centre as a waiting room
Poor acoustics in hall

The singing group
New members joining
Publicity and promotion
Relationship with group members
Group leader impact on group
Resistance to joining or joining in
Impact of music
Impact if lyrics

Negative views of the singing group
Judgemental environment
Cynicism of the group
Singing group not welcomed by other centre users
Group not inclusive
Negative views of the singers
Group singing out of tune

Positive views of the singing group
Support for the group
Well-being through participation
Singing group welcomed by other centre users
Positive group singing experience
Emotional connection
Positive emotions
Sense of community
Singing group welcomed by other centre users

Member of other arts group for people with EH
Member of journalist group
Member of guitar group
Motivation to join groups
Recruitment practises
Skills and qualities of group leader
Relationship between group leader and member
Financial incentives to join groups
Non-social activity
Resistance to joining or joining in

Appendix 6

Rio Codes

Issues around homelessness
Homeless are individuals not homogenous group
Lesson in survival
Homeless is a test
Alone, no support or friends
Lack of visibility
Hunger
Theft
Drug addiction
Political activist
Stigma and discrimination
Independence
Leave homelessness then return
Dislike for homeless people
Public scared of homeless
Violence around homelessness
Previously a professional
Homeless supporting the homeless
Local area distinctions
Social breakdown
Feel you no longer exist
Detached from reality
Loss of self-awareness
Erratic behaviour
Mood swings
Career 'rupture'
Discrimination of disabilities
Family breakdown
Financial instability
Contracting TB
Needing medical care
Positives of homelessness
Listening to music
Music to make money
People EH* are not musical
Routes into homelessness
Routes out of homelessness
Empowered by owning a library card
Refusing short -term support
Social responsibility
Experiences in the hostel
Support out-with the group
Member of Homeless People's Movement
Representing the homeless
Brazil unjust and corrupt

Group Leader and Organisation Related Codes
Staff experience of working in the homeless sector
Group leader in support or care role
Session leader skills and qualities
Staff musical background
Challenges with staff role
Structure of the groups
Group leader bringing hope
Sense of empathy
Group leader's belief in members
Integrity and honesty of group leader
Leader no experience of working with homelessness
Leader experience of working with homelessness
Leaders musical experience
Leaders job is challenging
Homeless lack musicality
Group leader vocation
Leader as friend
Empathy of leader
Uncertainty of job
Job challenging

Benefits of participating
Finding yourself
Learning about yourself
Acceptance of self
Connection to self
Increased self-awareness
Singing to reinvent yourself
More open minded
Stop drinking
Stop taking drugs
Potential to earn money
Bringing transformation
Mental engagement
Cognitive benefits
Mental distraction
Supported, cared for and loved
Re-joining society
Wellbeing through participation
Group brings structure
A positive challenge
Relying on the choir
Feeling I exist
Introvert to extrovert
Confidence and self-esteem
Flourishing
Positive anticipation
Feelings of pleasure
Feelings of enjoyment
Feelings of relaxation
Arts giving people a voice
Arts to teach you a lesson
Less materialistic
Stress relief
Group as an incentive to leave homelessness
Group helping to accept current situation
Feeling happier
Group is a 'good laugh'
Pushed out of comfort zone
Hobby and distraction
Group as a serious venture
Increased popularity
Singing to revive
Group as a life-line
More attention to detail
Addressing group feuds
Motivating
Re-joining society

Care in personal appearance
Positive emotions
Wellbeing benefits
Group brings structure
Transformational experience
Arts as a tool for change
Reinserted back into life
Wellbeing
Changes in behaviour
Spiritual affect
Cultural exchanges
Learning opportunities

Challenges
Negative aspects of participating
Challenging relationships
Negative around group experience
Challenging the disbelief of others
Frustration around lack of public recognition
Reduce wellbeing
In group fighting
Challenges with behaviour
Challenging organisational focus
Violence between members

Relationships
Awareness of others
Acceptance of others
Tolerance of others
Sense of belonging
Connection to others
Social Impact – positive
Social impact – negative
Relationship between staff and members beyond group
Relationship between staff and members in the group
Leader not treating members all the same
Relationships between members
Tensions between members
Meeting people beyond the group
Member share experiences
New relationships
Social integration
Me versus Others
Share stories and experiences
Re-assess opinion of other members
International connections

The Session
Recruitment practises
Roles played by members in the group
Shifting mood of singers
Visibility and recognition
Inclusivity
Avoid missing the session
Invited and welcomed in
Group infrastructure
Arts brings no changes
Out of comfort zone
Organisational support
Assigned group roles
Singers in negative state before joining
Expectations and discipline

Group Members
Characteristics of members
Musical background of members
Memory and reminiscence
Emotional connection
Shifting mood of singers
Visibility and recognition
Self-assigned group roles

Identity
Identity work - members
Identity work – staff
Disassociating from homeless identity

Attitudinal shift
Attitudinal shift of singers
Attitudinal shift of the choir leader
Attitudinal shift of the audience and public

Music and Singing
Impact of music - negative
Impact of music – positive
Musical challenges
Lyrics tell your story
Songs to motivate
Inspiring lyrics
Music to cleanse
Other musical activities than singing
Lack of musicality
Develop musical skills

Health and Emotional Health
General health issues
Mental health relief

Performances
Sense of belonging at performances
Performances and their impact – positive
Performances and their impact -negative
Positive audience response
Challenging audiences' perceptions
Performance opportunities
Increased social opportunities
Welcomed into venues
Affecting audiences' emotions
Anxious/Excited anticipation
Audience response
Belonging

(EH= Experience of Homelessness)

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